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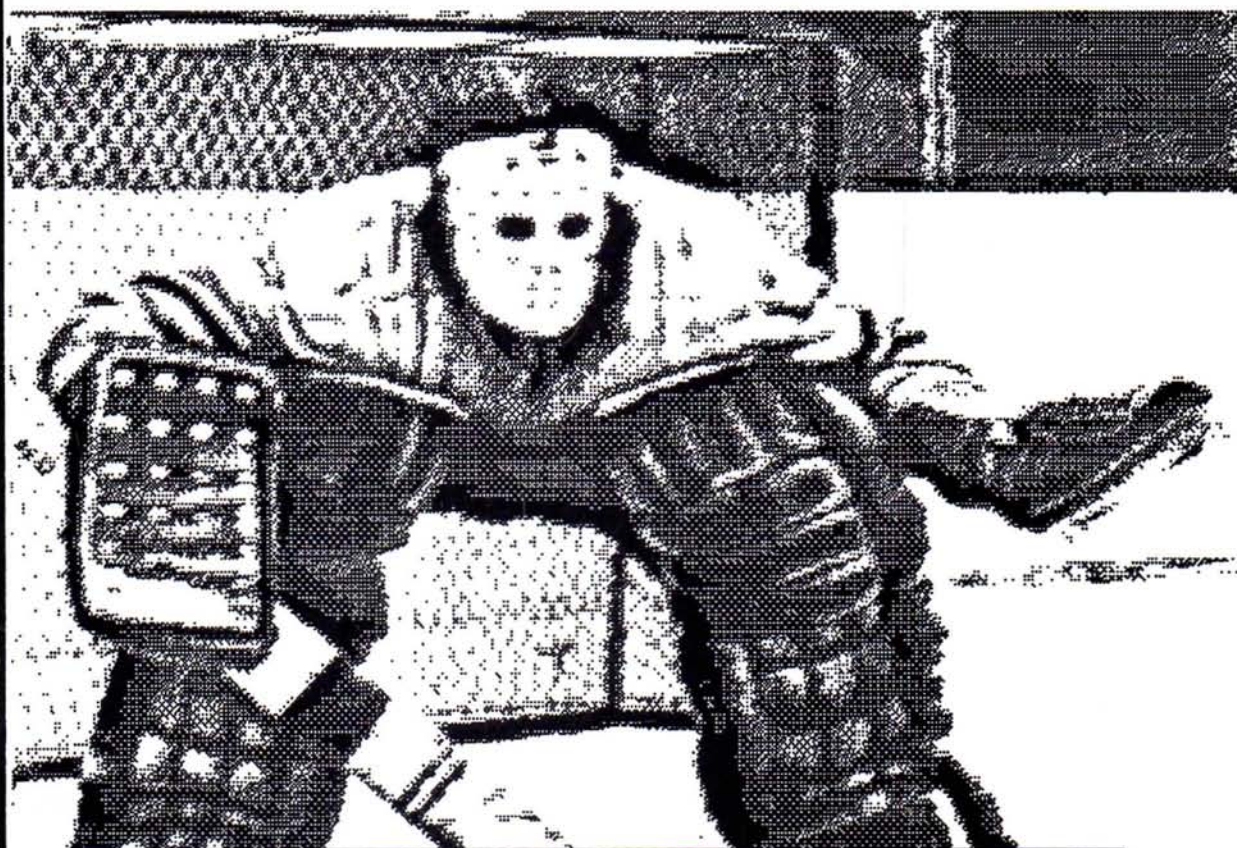
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL ATARI USERS' GROUP

ADVENTURE GAME SPECIAL

November 1987

FEATURING REVIEWS OF:

AUTODUEL • ALTERNATE REALITY-THE DUNGEON • BARBARIAN



SUPERBASE REVIEW

COMPUCENTRE SPEAK S

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BYTOWN BYTES

NOVEMBER 1987

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The N.C.A.U.G. EXECUTIVE

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ADVERTISING Harry Wilkinson

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[all Atari 16-bit computers]

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[all Atari 8-bit computers]

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N.C.A.U.G. 1987 MEETING SCHEDULE

ST Meetings will be held the last Tuesday of every month; XE Meetings the last Saturday of every month.

ST MEETINGS Tuesday 7 PM

Oct. 27
Nov 24

XE MEETINGS Sat. 9:30 AM

Oct. 31
Nov 28

No meetings in December

Meetings are held in the auditorium of the NRC Building, 100 Sussex Drive.

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Exchange Subscriptions are available to other Atari User Groups. Send exchange newsletters to Dave Sarles at the address shown above.

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Advertising Rates Back (3/4) page, \$55.00; inside front or back cover pages, \$45.00; other full pages, \$40.00; half page, \$25.00; quarter page, \$15.00. Submit camera ready copy to the Advertising Co-ordinator by the 12th of the preceding month. Circulation: 400 (members 200, local store sales 100, exchange and other 100).

Submissions of articles or advertising copy, subscription requests or back issue orders should be sent to the N.C.A.U.G. at the address above. Local members wishing to submit articles may leave them at G Plus, 130 Albert Street. The deadline for articles and ads is the 12th day of the preceding month.

RAMTOP REMARKS

The cold weather of the past month has shown that it is once again time for NCAUG members to return to their computers in earnest. With the change in seasons from suntan lotion and barbecues to the waiting for the bus shiver, the club itself has undergone yet even one more change. The position for ST president has been filled; and just who is the lucky person you ask. Here are a few clues:

1. He is at every meeting.
2. He spends more time at Hemingway's than at the meetings.
3. He is an acknowledged software glutton.
4. He runs his ST as an ST, IBM PC and a MacIntosh.

The answer is of course Glenn Brown!
Welcome back Glenn (as if he was ever gone!).

Keith Burnage
NCAUG Director

Employment Opportunities in the NCAUG

Although such high profile and high paying jobs go quickly, we still have a few more choice positions available for NCAUG members who are willing to help out.

Store Contact: We are looking for a volunteer to act as the club contact person (handle the NCAUG disks, Bytown Bytes, and advertising requirements) for Microplay on Merivale Road.

Merchandizing Coordinator: This position will soon be open for a person who would act as overall coordinator for the various store contacts.

Bulk Mailing Coordinator: This person will have to distribute Bytown Bytes in bulk.

International Newsletter Sales Coordinator: This person will have to ship and invoice for non-local newsletter sales.

Current Notes Sales coordinator: This person would control the distribution and sales of Current Notes at the XE and ST meetings.

Layout Artists: These people would have to be willing to use Publishing Partner to create final art pages for Bytown Bytes.

If you are interested in volunteering for one or more of these positions, please give me a call.

Bob Thompson
Home: 723-7453 Work: 996-0740

The Editor Writes

This month seemed to be adventure month, only because of the number of articles submitted on the topic. The article on Autoduel will be of interest to both XE and ST users since the program is now available in both formats. The review of Alternate Reality - The Dungeon (the sequel to Alternate Reality - The City) is in the XE section; but should be of interest to ST users also, since Alternate Reality is now available for the ST. The article on Barbarian may have a few tips for those struggling with that excellent graphic action adventure.

Speaking of graphics, in our quest for improved visual content for the newsletter we present the first three digitized images produced for Bytown Bytes. These images were created by Jim Turner on the club's new IMG SCAN digitizer. See the article below for more information.

Harry Wilkinson's review of Superbase should satisfy the appetites of the applications software users until next month when Glenn Brown promises his comparison of Data Bases article.

Also this issue I have finally taken the time to compile the results of the first three Reader Survey cards. The results were interesting; I only wish I had a greater number of responses so that I could be sure I was getting accurate ratings.

Keep those articles coming!
Until next time ... happy computing!

Bob Thompson

About the Cover:

This issue's cover by Jim Turner is a digitized image of the painting "AT THE CREASE" by Ken Danby. A photocopy of the picture was scanned by the IMG SCAN image scanner from Seymor-Radix. The scanned image was saved as a Degas low resolution picture, converted to high resolution using Degas, imported into Publishing Partner, and printed on a laser printer. Next issue we should have a full article on the IMG SCAN device that turns your dot matrix printer into a scanner. Two other scanned images are in this issue. The image on page 25, and the barbarian on page 36 are both scanned images of two of Frazetta's famous paintings.

CORRECTION

In the July-August Bytown Bytes we ran an article "MICRO C-Shell - an update to avoid. The title should have read MT C-Shell - an update to avoid. The article explains the problem fully, but our title was misleading.

Results of Survey Cards

Compiled by Bob Thompson

Well, here it is; the first results of those pesky Survey cards that I threaten people with every month. The response has not exactly been overwhelming, but the comments and figures have been quite revealing.

General

The general comments have been very informative. The comment that I liked best was:

"Bytown Bytes is so good it completely transcends the scope of a club newsletter. The articles are consistently well written and the technical production is of a very professional caliber. Frankly I find that 'Bytes' has as much or more solid info in it as the commercial publications. Please keep up the great work!!"

Honest, I didn't write that myself. Others were not quite as kind. Comments such as "exceptionally well done" were followed with "badly in need of editing". There were several comments on spelling errors and grammar mistakes. We have been trying harder to catch these errors through editing and more care with the authors.

Another common comment was that they did not like articles on games. Although this may be representative of how user group members feel, it does not seem to represent Atari owners in general.

The controversy of XE vs ST was raised many times, particularly in the form of low ratings for level of interest in XE articles, and many survey cards not rating the XE articles. This of course reflects the number of ST owners in the NCAUG that responded to the survey cards.

Comments were made on the lack of prices and manufacturer's information with articles. This situation has been noted and is

being corrected.

Several responses made reference to the desire to have more local and club activity information (especially on the disks of the month) in the newsletter. Also noted several times was the lack of telephone numbers for contacts with the NCAUG executive, and lack of introductions and identification of the executive at the meetings.

There were of course several contradictory comments such as those who want no programming articles, offset by those who want program listings to be in the newsletter.

Other comments included:

- a need for a listing of contents of other magazines' articles as a service to members;
- a column on problems and bugs encountered with productivity software, and suggested solutions;
- more articles on how to use the ST.

The Results

I have compiled the results of the responses to arrive at the average rating for each article, by level of interest of the article, and the execution of the article. All articles are rated on a scale from 1 to 5; with 1 being terrible, and 5 being great. I have highlighted any articles that average over 4.0.

Survey Card Number 1

May 1987 (7 responses)

Ramtop Remarks	3.5	3.8
The Editor Writes	3.8	3.6
Byte This	3.8	4.3
Battle Cruiser	1.6	4.0
Sneak Peeks	3.2	4.0
3rd Anniversary	4.0	4.0
Window on Gaming	3.0	3.7
Classified	4.0	3.7
About the Cover	3.0	3.5
The ST President	4.0	3.7
Relax and Enjoy	3.5	4.0
News Exchange	2.3	3.5

Atari & NEWSNET	4.2	3.0
Arctic Fox Review	2.3	3.2
Function Aid	2.5	2.8
A Menu for Programs	3.0	3.6
FAST Review	2.3	3.5
Publishing Partner	2.3	3.7
ASSEMBRO Review	3.0	4.0
GFA Basic Review	3.8	3.5
ST Tips	4.3	3.5
Labelmaster Review	3.0	3.8
The Pawn Spoiler	2.2	4.0
Survey Card	3.5	3.8

Survey Card Number 2

June 1987 (11 responses)

Ramtop Remarks	3.4	3.4
The Editor Writes	3.7	3.7
Byte This	4.0	4.1
Letter to the Editor	3.4	3.7
The Mail Bag	3.8	3.3
Sneak Peeks	3.9	3.9
Window on Gaming	2.8	3.7
The Atari Community	2.8	3.2
Classified	3.6	3.5
Home Security System	2.8	3.5
Tips & Bits	3.2	3.4
About the Cover	3.4	3.4
ST Presidential Bytes	4.1	3.7
STuff	4.3	4.2
Atari & USENET	3.9	3.4
Aliants - Preview	2.9	3.7
Aliants - First Look	2.7	3.7
Hard Facts	3.1	3.4
PowerPlan Review	3.9	4.1
Roadwar 2000 Review	2.9	3.5
Golden Path Review	2.8	3.5
ST Digi-Drum Review	2.9	3.0
Labelmaster Elite	3.7	3.6
Hardball Review	2.7	3.4
Colonial Conquest	2.8	3.7
Word Writer Review	4.1	4.0
Survey Card	3.7	4.0

Survey Card Number 3

July/August (4 responses)

Ramtop Remarks	3.0	3.2
The Editor Writes	3.2	2.7
In Memorial	3.7	3.7
About the Cover	3.0	3.2
Byte This	3.2	3.2
A Bit of Rib	3.0	3.2
Sneak Peeks	3.2	2.7
Window on Gaming	2.7	3.2
Visicues	3.2	3.2
Tips & Bits	1.7	2.5
XE Library	1.7	3.0

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3 1/2" DSDD Control Data Storage Master \$24.99

Video Tapes

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• Sony, T120 Dynamicon

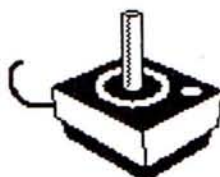
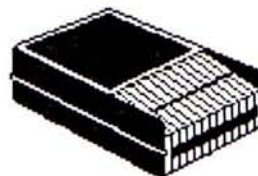
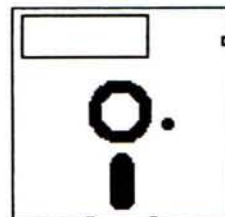
• Scotch T120 EG

• Panasonic T120 Premium STD

Clearance

Infocom software for Atari ST and Amiga \$17.99 each

*** WE PAY CASH FOR GAME SYSTEMS AND CARTRIDGES, ANY CONDITION***



News Station	1.7	3.5
Mercenary Review	2.0	3.0
ST Presidential Bytes	2.7	3.0
Cheap Upgrade	3.2	3.0
ST Tips	3.7	3.2
ST Base BBS	3.7	4.0
Hardball Review	2.5	2.7
Championship B.B.	2.5	3.0
MicroLeague B.B.	2.5	3.0
Super Directory	3.5	3.0
MidiSoft Studio	2.0	3.0
Sart Review	3.0	3.5
Publishing Partner	2.7	3.0
Micro C-Shell Review	2.7	3.2
High Roller Review	2.5	3.2
Bytown Bytes Index	4.5	4.0
Classified	3.7	3.5
Survey Card	3.2	3.7

Conclusions

I will not attempt to analyze the figures, but I should state some of the comments made regarding specific articles.

Perhaps the most powerful comment came for 'Byte This': "This column naseates me".

Although there were a number of 1's rated on the 'Byte This' series, they were more than offset by the number of 5's awarded. Obviously the members either love or hate this series. The 'Bit of Rib' article received the most interesting comment: "Great typography".

A suitable warning was expressed on the article 'Cheap Upgrade for Your Single Sided Drive'; "dangerous for amateurs". (I feel that the same warning applies to the article 'Connecting a 5.25" Drive to Your ST' found in the last issue.)

Although the figures compiled from these three surveys could be interpreted in many ways; there appears to me a general trend that can be followed throughout the results.

Aside from the insanity of the 'Byte This' series, it appears that our members responding to the surveys are primarily interested in news items and tips, followed by

articles on productivity software, with little interest in game reviews.

In general, it appears that the level of execution exceeds the level of interest in most articles. This could be interpreted to mean that there is little interest in what we print, but it is well written trash.

Seriously though, we should refrain from making sweeping changes on the basis of these surveys until we can get a larger number of responses.

I am convinced that the idea of survey cards is valid as it gives a forum for all members to comment and complain about the newsletter and the NCAUG organization in general. Please take the time to fill out and return the survey cards. The greater the base of responses, the more meaningful the results.

Bob Thompson
Editor, Bytown Bytes

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL ATARI USERS' GROUP

Editor's Note: The following letter was submitted to me by NCAUG member William Demmery, and is reprinted here in full.

" I address this primarily, but not exclusively, to the members of the NCAUG executive.

I bought my Atari 130XE this past March and have been very pleased with it. This was not my first exposure to the Atari eight-bits, but it was the first time I have actually owned one myself. The Atari eight-bit line represents the most cross-compatible line of computers ever developed and is the best eight-bit available - at any price. The Atari eight-bit is, therefore, the ideal computer for the beginning computer enthusiast. The ST line appears to be heading in that same direction and already is the most powerful computer available under the price of \$5,000 - or even more. Naturally, the computer enthusiast - especially the beginning computer enthusiast - usually requires some assistance and support in order to make the best use of his machine. In Ottawa, he will find his needs well-met by the National Capital Atari Users' Group, which clearly is one of the finest users' groups of its size on the continent.

I began attending NCAUG eight-bit meetings in March; I now also attend the ST meetings, having acquired a 1040 colour system in August. So far, I have been impressed overall with NCAUG: the club membership is well-informed and interested in far more than just gaming; the executive is on top of things and always has news of the latest developments in the industry; two separate BBS's are maintained; a magazine of exceptional quality is published regularly; and the overall level of dedication in the group is remarkable. Despite all this, however, I have found the meetings to be lacking something; they seem rather impersonal and don't really live up to the potential of the resources available - especially in the case of the eight-bit meetings. I therefore offer a few suggestions which, I believe, will be beneficial - particularly to the new member - but also to the club as a whole.

When I arrived for my first NCAUG meeting, I was very impressed with the facilities used; the auditorium is beautiful and possesses good acoustics. I chose a seat a few rows from the front, expecting a rather large crowd to arrive. In fact, when all had arrived, the seating density was rather sparse (I have since seen that this is NOT the case with meetings of the ST side). I feel that when the members spread out so much at a meeting, something is lost; the meeting becomes more impersonal, and interaction with any members other than those who have chosen to sit immediately nearby is limited to the break or after the meeting has finished. Perhaps a smaller meeting place could be used; alternatively, members might be encouraged to move in closer to the front.

Another concern - and this applies to the NCAUG as a whole - is that the speakers at any given meeting are not always clearly identified. This is not helpful to a newcomer - and certainly NCAUG would wish to positively impress a prospective new member. Even now, I am not always sure

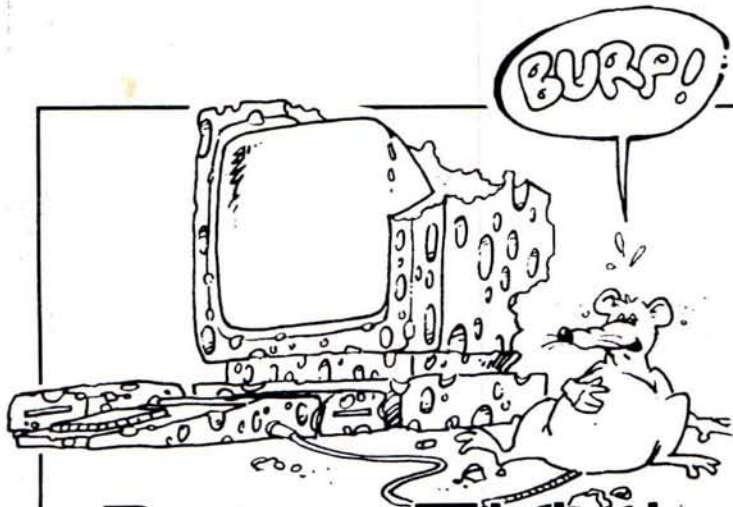
who is speaking; therefore, I suggest that all the executive members present - speaking or not - and anyone else who should speak, be clearly identified. In addition to this, it may be helpful to have a small information package available for the new member, describing NCAUG, its history and its resources. I believe this will greatly aid the newcomer in becoming familiar, and working effectively, with NCAUG.

NCAUG meetings are held once a month, and I look forward to each one. However, three hours per month is not a lot of time. I, for one, would be interested in seeing Special Interest Groups formed for those members with common, but specific, interests. I realize that this could be left up to the individual members, but perhaps NCAUG could serve as the umbrella for a number of different SIGs, each of which could be engaged in ongoing projects, reporting on progress and sharing information at each monthly NCAUG meeting. In this way, the more experienced users could share their expertise with those interested in expanding their own skills, and thus everyone could be making a contribution, the end result being that everyone, and therefore NCAUG as a whole, benefits.

A great rift seems to have developed between owners of the eight- and sixteen-bit Atari computers. Instead of unity, we have a growing rivalry, which has sparked some bitterness and concern about the future of the Atari community - especially on the part of the eight-bit owners, who are seeing their numbers dwindle rapidly. Indeed, a great many eight-bit owners have sold their systems - sometimes pulling down BBS's - for the sake of purchasing an ST. The two sides must start working more closely, before there is a total split between the groups. Current eight-bit owners should be encouraged to retain their systems when they finally do buy an ST, and more emphasis should be placed on positive developments concerning the eight-bits - rather than the current trend toward a common opinion that the eight-bit is practically dead. It is NOT dead - and in most of the rest of this nation, eight-bits still far outnumber ST's. This must be stressed to eight-bit owners who are uncertain as to what the future holds. The two NCAUGs must work more closely; perhaps a representative from each side could be present at meetings of the other, to share the latest information on that aspect of Atari computing. Club unity will set a good example for everyone.

Finally, at the present time, NCAUG seems rather lopsided in some ways. The executive members obviously spend a great deal of time and effort preparing for, and participating in, the monthly meetings. At the meetings, they do most of the speaking, and the regular members ask a few questions and occasionally share some information of their own; but basically, an NCAUG meeting is more a presentation than a meeting. I believe the suggestions which I have outlined above would greatly help in getting the non-executive members to play a more active role in the operation of the club.

To summarize, then: the members present at meetings should be closer together, perhaps in a smaller meeting room; speakers and all executive members present - whether they will be speaking or not - should be clearly identified; the idea of Special Interest Groups should be explored; and the two sides of NCAUG should work more closely, rather than being quite isolated from another - at least from an ordinary member's point of view. Thus, members will be encouraged to play a more significant part in the continued growth, development and unity of the National Capital Atari Users' Group."



Byte This!

A Note to the Readers: As you are probably aware, I have produced this column for well over a year now and it has only been in the last while that I have had to put my name to it. As long as I was anonymous, I felt that I could say anything and take the credit for it. I now must own up to the painful truth: I do not write this column.

One day, shortly after I had bought my computer, I was out shopping for a birthday present for my dog and I ended up at a flea market. I didn't find any suitable fleas but I did come across a guy selling used disks at \$5.00 a box. Needless to say, I bought 4 boxes.

When I got them home, I checked them before I formatted each and I found that most contained the diary of an unknown soldier of the computer wars. I am ashamed to say that I took the text of this diary and called it my own. However, since I wasn't identified, I didn't feel that I was taking any credit that belonged to someone else. All that has changed with the need for identification on each article.

Due to overwhelming demand (see reader survey results), I will continue to produce this column, but from now on I will no longer live a life of lies. I am proud to say that my children will never again have to go to school with a paper bag over their heads because of what their classmates think I have called them. My wife does not wait in hiding to poison me with supper. I do not live the life that is described in the article but I am glad to be the person who is able to bring the day-to-day struggle of computers and owners to light.

The following is the next excerpt from the flea market disks (which, until now, I have made no attempt to keep in chronological order). Once more, I apologize for stealing someone else's work, but I hope that you will understand and accept the following in the spirit that it was intended.

<diary begining disk 5, sector 12, track 6>Iprint:...

This computer has really gotten me into trouble now. I as given a tme-management/communications-/agenda/hockey pool program that was supposed to take care of everything that happened in my life. But I found out that when I forget to tell it something, it

forgets to tell me when I'm supposed to do it and no computer program in the world can protect me from the wrath of Froot Loops when I forget the third anniversary of her facelift. If that was the only thing that had gone wrong, I would probably be allowed out of the basement today, but I don't think that I will ever be considered a part of this family again.

The program I was given was Public Domain. This means that the guy who wrote it used a phoney name when he gave it out so nobody could track him down.

I really scored points with this program. Every chance I got, I would sit down and enter everything that I had to do on a day into the memo for that day.

As fast as I found things to do, I would enter them in. I even got to the point that I was going around to people that I knew and asking them if there was anything that they wanted me to do on the afternoon of April 26, 1993. I had down everybody's birthday, anniversary and mortgage foreclosure date but somehow I felt that I was missing something. Now I know. Damn, I forgot the rent date. Now we have to move. That means that I'm going to have to find a house that will handle the computer. I tried to talk to the landlord, but he only seemed interested in unclogging Froot Loops' drain (I thought that that was a medical problem and that was only solved by seeing a chiropractor).

I can't say that the family is too upset about moving. The kids would like to have a window somewhere in the house (especially if it looks out above ground). For myself, I look forward to being able to give an apartment number that is more than one digit. I went to a rental agent and told him my requirements for a new home. We need a room with a scrubbable floor so that we can clean up after the Rat Kids if the kitty litter breaks down. We need a lot of closet space for whips and cattle prods (we all know who owns those!). And we need a stabilized, uninterrupted, spike-free power supply for the computer.

I finally found the perfect spot. It's got everything we need - stable, uninterruptable, spike-free power. The trouble is that the rest of the family won't move into a warehouse in an industrial park. The suggestion has been made that all parts of me, including the computer and the rest of my "filthy toys" could move to the warehouse and the family would remember me by regularly cashing my pay cheque. The moving date is fast approaching (I have a computer porogram that tells me that you know) and we still have no new home. I'm afraid that we'll have to finish up at the mother-in-law's. Mamie the Mongoose's den.

Terry Webb

A bit of rib

by kathleen wright

there are the fonts
unique in mood
and dress

so i am told
i must believe
these are just great
i guess

More and more I find myself doing things I'd not ever planned: just get lured into it, I guess. Or is it my age?

Recently I found myself at yet another desktop publishing workshop, and believe me, I'm beginning to get some very firm ideas about this stuff. Talk about alluring! Machines that wrap around just about everything, pictures, words, other pictures, more words ... and I mean complicated.

But when the nice man who was showing me this, and he really knew his mouse and how to use it, well when he told me I could choose from over 500 different fonts! I mean, that is for experts, I don't even have time to look at 500 different fonts.

I have, however, looked at and tried my Atari fonts [sounds like a recipe, doesn't it?]. The fonts are fun to use and you can make them almost any size: so tiny you cannot read them without enlargement on the screen, and very very large. I've had a few problems with the large ones though, especially if the word is in small and I make it bigger, then bigger, then outline, then shadow, then tall, then wide, then bomb.

Another thing, when I have done something and saved it for later. Later comes and I am back at the machine (everyone else is at work or school) and I turn it on and it tells me what it is ready to do (press font and it tells me name and size, also having loaded all the

ones I was using). But there is a catch ... it does not tell me what the old ones are! And I can never remember.

Of course I had the names and numbers written down somewhere, all the ones I tried and used and so on, I know I put that list somewhere on my desk, or ...

I can figure them out you know, by guessing and matching, but is hard to do. If my memory was that great I'd recognize them all by sight and wouldn't need my notes. I'm glad I don't have 500 of them to learn, because I wouldn't.

Some fonts are very decorative, though, and look nice on the screen, but are disappointing when printed. I have found, therefore, that using one or two standards saves me a lot of work. For fancy work I use the fancy fonts, but sparingly, like cardamom or red hot peppers.

I am amazed at how much I have learned about the machine: but I don't really trust it yet, as the men (and women) behind the vendors' counters know. Operating on the K.I.S.S. principle, (which has always made sense to me), I ask some pretty simple minded questions but people never seem to mind answering. And, so I am told, much more is yet to come. The computer world, it seems, has just begun.

I can imagine the future: ...

A is for my Atari
B is for bite (oops!)
C is for computer
D is for data base
E is for energetic
G is for graphics
H is for how-do-you

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SNEAK ○ PEEKS

Once again the news on the software front is busy, busy, busy. But when you consider that the CES show was over just a short while ago, and with Christmas only a few months away the situation is normal. As with last month the Still in Town section has been sacrificed to make room for all of the information on the new titles. For ST owners, who have been waiting and waiting for wargames, the number of new titles has reached 6 in the past 2 months. Now if only SSI and Microprose would convert their XE titles over for us i would be one extremely happy gamer!

COMING ATTRACTIONS

BREACH (OMNITRED)

The first role-playing squad level war game for is coming from the company that gave us Universe II. The goal of the game is to successfully have your Squad Leader guide his marines through various scenarios, and at the same time have him carry out various actions that will raise his attributes. Just like other role-playing games this one makes use of attributes such as movement points, vitality, health, encumbrance, shooting, detecting and cracking. Each squad member is controlled via the mouse to shoot, pickup, drop or use items. Just like dungeon type games Breach scenarios can have from 1 to 5 levels. The graphics are well done, and the manual easily guides you through the various aspects of the game. The only 2 drawbacks to the game are that it uses a square grid, not a hexagonal grid. This would not be so bad if you could shoot diagonally, but you cannot so this takes away from some of the realism of the game. Secondly you cannot have a marine simply change his facing by having him turn around. On the plus side the game has a Scenario builder which lets you make additional scenarios, and for those with double sided drives the fact that the game is not copy protected means you can put both the Breach game and scenario builder on one disk. (ST) \$64.95 Can.

NEW IN TOWN

ROADWAR EUROPA (SSI)

(8) For those of us who have successfully completed Roadwar 2000, now comes a European version. This European version of Roadwar plays the same, but instead of touring around North America you will be barreling down the Autobon in Europe. Roadwar Europa will probably only appeal to real die hard Roadwar owners or those who have yet to buy the game. (ST) \$49.95 Can

DEFENDER OF THE CROWN (MINDSCAPE)

You've seen the ads. You've seen it on an Amiga, and now you will be seeing it on an ST. This game is of the role-playing historical simulation variety that takes place after the Second Crusade (1149 A.D) with you taking on the guise of a medieval Saxon knight battling it out with those Norman dogs. This game, at times, seems more like a movie with its realistic graphics that go so far as to depict the wavering shadows of characters lit by fire light. As with any role playing game you knight has several characteristics, leadership, jousting and swordplay, that affect how well he will do in duels, joust and sieges. Performing well in an area your knight's characteristic is weak will improve his ability in that characteristic. The game strikes a good balance between role-playing and strategy. Let's hope it will live up to its advanced hype. (ST) \$59.95 Can.

BOULDERDASH CON. SET (EPYX)

For those XE owners who have played the original version of this game to death now you can design your own caves to test your skill against. The game comes with 15 pre-built caves to try out or take your time to design your own. (XE) \$49.95 Can.

EMPIRE (INTERSTEL)

(7) This one came as a surprise to me since I have been waiting for Starfleet II to arrive. Empire is a module of the Starfleet games, but instead of taking place in space the action takes place on a conquered planet. Empire is the next step in controlling a star system, namely controlling the planet. As the General of the Alliance your job is to land on enemy held planets and capture 80 cities while battling it out with you opponet. To achieve this you will have to decide what sort of unit you want the city to build. Of course the more complex a unit is the more time it takes so planning your invasion strategy is a must. Should you stick to armies, fighters and transport ships or do you want to build a force that relies on a massive naval force to strike behind enemy lines. The game is for 1 to 3 players with the computer able to control 1 or 2 players, there is also a Play-By-Mail option and future versions will feature a Play-By-Modem function. The game has an unlimited skill level since you can set the combat and production skills for each player. The game comes with a wide variety of planetary maps to choose from, plus the ability to make your own maps. (ST) \$69.95 Can.

GAUNTLET (MINDSCAPE)

(7) Finally an inexpensive way for XE and ST owners to play the arcade version of the game without blowing a bundle in quarters. Just like the arcade version, the PC version features the four fearless characters, Warrior, Valkyrie, Wizard and Elf slashing their way through level after level. For those not in the know, Gauntlet is an arcade game where you guide one of the four characters on a quest to rack up as many points as you can by collecting treasure chests, magic potions and terminating a wide variety of ghosts, grunts, demons, evil wizards, death and lobbers. Unlike other games where you have 'x' number of lives Gauntlet starts each character off with 2000 hit points that start to dwindle right away. Getting hit by any of the bad guys causes more points to be lost. The only way to replenish your hit points is to eat the food scattered about the various levels, but be careful what you shoot some food and magic potions are destroyed if hit. The game can be played solo, but unlike the arcade version, can only allow a maximum of 2 players instead of all 4. The game can get slow at times when the level you are on has a lot of bad guys after you, but other than these 2 differences this game is just like the arcade version except that it does not eat quarters. (XE/ST) \$59.95 Can.

EAGLE'S NEST (MIDSCAPE)

(6) This game is just like Castle Wolfenstein that was one of the early Atari favorites, but with one change. Unlike its predecessor this game has colorful graphics. Eagle's nest is an arcade game for the ST that has you raiding a Nazi held fortress in search of prisoners, stolen art and activating the detonator to blow it up. Each level has storm troopers looking to gun you down, if you do not shoot them first, and just like Gauntlet you have a limited number of hit points that can be healed by using a medical kit or eating some cold food. Scattered about each level are ammo clips, keys, elevator passes, drunken officers and treasure chest. The game is a one player game, and has several levels to try your skill at and is played with the joystick. (ST) \$49.95 Can.

MICROLEAGUE WRESTLING (MLSA)

The people who brought us MicroLeague Baseball I & II offer us their latest sport (???) simulation. This game has you taking on the part of Hulk Hogan or his opponent, and like the baseball simulator, features play-by-play commentary. Instead of full animation for the wrestlers the game uses digitized pictures from real wrestling matches to depict the action. Each wrestler has 8 moves to choose from, and a fatigue gauge to show when to make that big move or stall for time. (ST) \$69.96 Can.

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE (MICROPROSE)

(7) Who could believe that 1 week after reading about F-15 coming out for the ST it actually appeared on store shelves! After much anticipation ST owners get to try their hand at being an Eagle Driver. As expected gone are the vector graphics of enemy planes that proved to be a weak spot in the XE version, but the graphics for the ground still leave something to be desired. The simulator has a complete Heads Up display, radar-electronic warfare display, and horizontal situation display. The game has 8 scenarios to try your skill at from a 1972 night mission over Haiphong in North Vietnam to the 1986 U.S. raid on Libya. The game plays identical to the XE version with all plane function being controlled from the keyboard, and the ST version can be flown with either the joystick or the mouse. Another change is that the ST version lets you keep a pilot file to keep track of your mission. The manual, as to be expected from Microprose, covers all of the bases with some in depth discussion on the F-15's performance. This game should give High Roller and Harrier Strike some good competition, and for me it is the best of all three. (ST) \$54.95 Can.

TERRORPODS (PSYGNOSIS LTD.)

If you have grown tired of Barbarian try your hand at Psygnosis' latest game. As with its previous efforts the graphics are a stand out and playing the game is pretty easy to learn. The game has you acting as a under cover agent, with a single fighter, observing the Empires plans after they took over a peaceful mining planet. Rather than kill off the workers the Empire is using them to mine the need ores to build the dreaded Terrorpods. Things were going smoothly for you until your presence was detected now all hell is breaking loose as you try to survive and thwart the Empire's plans. (ST) \$49.95 Can.

(The number system: 1 for terrible, 3 for tolerable, 5 for okay, 8 for excellent, 10 for fantastic)

Keith Burnage
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VISICLUES

by Michael D. Riley

PHONE: 731-9292

There has not been much activity in the gaming world since our last installment, it seems. I am pleased to report, however, that at the September ST meeting, several members approached me to indicate that they were pleased to see the column continuing. Some even had questions... and better, some had answers! So we're finally rolling, but remember please that I need your help to keep it that way, so try and rip yourself away from those screens every so often to phone me up. This time I've even remembered to include my PHONE NUMBER: 731-9292. I'm also still looking for volunteers who've played a few games who are willing to be used occasionally as resource personnel. Now, for the good stuff:

QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS:

BARBARIAN (Psygnosis)

Q: I'm 2/3 of the way through here, but at the head I keep getting killed. Any help out there? - Bob Deskin

VISI: Call Tommy Robbs; he's finished the game (1-256-3132).

ULTIMA II (Origin)

Q: What's the best type of character to start with? -- Tommy Robbs

VISI: Life as a Cleric will ease your problems. Otherwise, selection of race, and so on, are not important. In Old San Antonio, you'll find most of the game puzzles. (O)ffer money to the Hotel Clerk; You'll get four points for every hundred bucks (the attribute will be selected randomly). Strength never goes over 40, so buy up to that if you can. You'll need 90's to win the game, but don't go over 99 or you'll reset to zero. If you win a Blue Tassle, save the game so you'll always have it. Next, a ship is the best weapon you can have; the Pangea period, 9 million BC, is recommended as the best place to find one. In AD, at Port Boniface, (T)ransact with a Guard near the entry blocks. If he says "Pay your taxes", he's killable. Then you'll have two keys; you can go to the shipyards, cast (N)egate, unlock the door and steal a ship. You can't bring a ship to the Time of Legends: you have to get one there. If you have an airplane, you can fly to the ship when you see one. Legends is also a great place to get gold for buying hit points and attributes.

PHANTASIE II

Q: I need two more amulets; where can I get them? - T. Robbs

VISI: Bob Deskin can help you out here; he was out of town when this article was finished, but call him at 825-3542.

THE DUNGEON: A TIP OR TWO

VISI: When you start, you're at Square 60 North, 49 East. Find The Retreat at Square 60N, 54E. A yellow flash when you are walking indicates one of three things: you've either been spun around and are facing a new direction, or you've stepped through a Transporter and are in a new location, or if you are walking through the sewer system and have just

gone through a door, you've also just stepped two squares forward (the game is saved on disk in quarters, and is simply loading your new quadrant). The first Quest is at Square 38N, 60E. You need a silver key to free the prisoner; to get one you must kill a Master Thief, which requires either magic or an enchanter Rapier and a lot of luck. Once you free the prisoner, you will be transported to a new location. This is Square 34N, 17E. Note that all locations assume that you use "0" as your starting Square in the lower left corner of the map.

That's it, short and sweet. More next month, I hope. As you know, the idea in this column is to get your answers to you by phone, but I'm finding out that getting people at home, even at work, is not that easy. Until next ish, keep on (fill in cliché of your choice).

CLASSIFIED

Small items such as ads for articles wanted or for sale, questions, problems, tips, or other brief messages will be placed in this section free of charge to NCAUG members.

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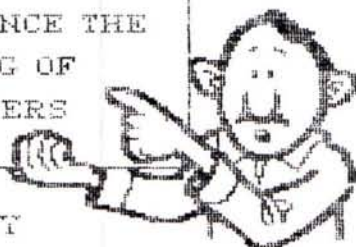
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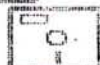
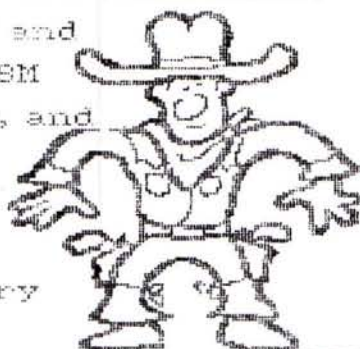
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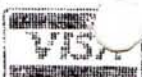
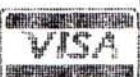
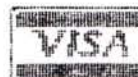
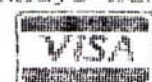
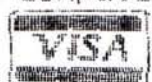
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AUTODUEL

A Strategy Role-Playing Game
By LORD BRITISH and CHUCKLES
From ORIGIN SYSTEMS INC.
Price: \$69.95
by Michael D. Riley

The radar screen in your heavily-armoured luxury automobile shows two blips up ahead and to the right... and they look like big ones. Steeling yourself for another sweat-filled round of trading laser blasts, you check your ammo supply and hit points. No problem there, you've got lots of battery left to power your laser, and so far this trip, you've been lucky: not a chink in your personal armour from those seven or eight boneheads and their vehicles littering the highway all the way back to New York. You're delivering a valuable load of micro-organisms to the Gold Cross institute in Boston, and the payoff, if you make it alive this courier trip, is a big \$15,000. Of course, you'll probably need it all to repair this monster of a car you call Hard Drive. Too many hits from too many Outlaws has worn down the armour on your wheels just a little too much for comfort. Oh well, there's a garage in Scranton... gotta go through their on your way to Boston anyway.

Slamming the hammer down, you wheel around the corner and find yourself staring at two of the ugliest Outlaw vans you've (gulp) ever seen. Let's hope all that practice wiping out van goons at the Arena pays off now! Pulling a quick U-ee, you give 'em a blast with your rear-mounted flamethrower, and ...

And so goes another day in the life of an Auto-Duellist, a professional road-warrior based in the 2030. If you've seen the box and artwork for this wild variation of a D & D game, you know its based on the board game CAR WARS, by Steve Jackson. Everything I've read in reference to that fact says its an immensely popular pastime, too, and has been since long before the first computer version became available. I had never heard of it until I bought this game, but I can sure see what all the excitement is about.

**you wheel around the corner
and find yourself staring at two
of the ugliest Outlaw vans
you've (gulp) ever seen**

The major difference between this and other role-playing games is that you earn money (although still by knocking off the enemy) to allow you to build and arm better and stronger vehicles, rather than yourself. Driving is the only way to go in this future-world, and anyone with a wimpy car isn't going to last long. As the screen says when the disk is first loaded: "Where the right of way goes to the BIG guns". Once you've created a small convoy of killer cars, you can spend more time improving your personal traits: driving skill, marksmanship, and mechanic skills.

"Where the right of way goes to the BIG guns"

When you start as a new character, you are supplied with 2000 in cash and 50 points to distribute between your three traits. This gives you a good shot at staying alive long enough to earn some money so you can build your first car. The first screen shows you an overhead view of New York City (greatly reduced, of course) which is your starting location. The world of AutoDuel is confined to the northeast States, and consists of 16 cities and a lot of highway in between. You'll know this from the map provided by the American AutoDuel Association, under whose auspices most of the world of 2030 seems to operate. They provide the courier jobs that give you a chance to make money and build up prestige. This is a double-edged sword, because many jobs you might get are limited by the amount of prestige you have earned. There is another way to earn prestige, and make money, and therein do we find the beginning of the action in this game.

There are several establishments in each city; larger cities have more to offer. New York has just about everything: a truck stop, a garage, a Gold Cross, an AADA, "Joe's Bar" (Joe must be a rich man: there's a bar with his name on it in every city), a weapon shop, an FBI building, an auto assembly plant, and an Arena. It's at the Arena where you can earn some cash.

Autoduelling is the National Sport of the Future: Duels are held every night, with regional championships every few weeks. The Duels are televised, according to the documentation, to viewers all over the world. Drivers with varying levels of prestige can fight at their own class level, and you can get a sched-

ule of events just by walking into the arena. Once a week is amateur night, and that's where the fledgeling Duellist must begin. You don't need your own car: the Arena will provide you with a "Killer Kart", a zippy little screamer reminiscent of a Volkswagen dune-buggy, with a machine gun mounted up front. On amateur night, there are five opponents to gun down. The screen shifts to a portion of the Arena, which is BIG, and your Kart's status is displayed, along with your radar screen showing the locations of the other Duellists. A handy little reference card is provided to help you figure out what everything is until you've played enough to have become familiar with all the doodads.

The only purpose in the Arena is to kill or be killed. If the heat's too much, you can leave the Arena without having gotten rid of all your opponents, but you will gain nothing in terms of Prestige points, and you won't get any prize money. So learn some driving and shooting tactics, and stick it out. This is easily accomplished by selecting the 'Practice' session offered to you when you first enter the Arena. For twenty bucks, you get a Killer Kart and a gun full of ammo. You enter the battlefield alone, and this is a good opportunity to test-drive the joystick. Vehicle handling is straightforward, but the controls respond more like a car than an arcade spaceship.

The world of AutoDuel runs a day at a time, and after the Arena closes, you'll find that most of the places in town are closed up for the night. The only way to get back in is to get a room until the next day. Ten dollars will put you up at the Truck Stop, where you can also buy body armour to protect yourself in case some of those bullets pierce your vehicle armour. With body armour, your maximum "damage points" will never go above six. This is quite a difference from other role-playing games, and that's why vehicle armour is so important.

You'll be in the car most of the time anyway. When you've gotten your sleep, you can listen for rumours over a cup of coffee, before heading off to the Arena for another try at the prize money. Or go over to Joe's bar for a drink. But you'll really need a few more kills under your belt before you have enough money to build your own car, so the Arena is your best bet for now.

Let's say you've earned a few dollars. At the same time, you've suffered a couple of points in wounds. Go to the Gold Cross building, where you can get patched up (for a small fee). If you're rich enough, you can buy a clone here for five grand. In the (likely) event you get wasted some time in the near future, your clone will be activated in the city where it was created,

and you can continue to play. You will be minus any experience or purchases you made since the clone was made, but you won't be dead. Personally, I can't see the need for a clone, at least not in the computer version of the game. If you have saved your character to disk, which you should do often (especially after a victory or a successful courier trip), you can just load him/her back into the game. And you save \$5,000 to boot.

If you're all healed up and anxious to take on some new work, a trip to the auto Assembly plant will get you your all important new car. Once you enter the plant, you are presented with a weighty list of options to choose from to customize your personal Death Vehicle.

The AutoDuel Manual & New Driver's Guide, supplied with the game, clearly outlines and details the choices available. They are also listed on-screen. It appears that in the board-game version, this is where all the imagination comes in. You can select from seven body types, from subcompact car to van, and then determine how strong the chassis and suspension will be (allowing more or less room for weapons and cargo, and a higher or lower handling ability for out-maneuvring other vehicles). Add to that the size of your engine or power plant (four motors per vehicle: one to each wheel), to cover power and speed. Then install some tires: standard at \$50 a track, or Solid, at \$1000 a set?

These can't be random choices either, because the vehicle size and chassis will determine how much you can carry in the way of weapons, ammo and cargo. Having the manual to refer to while selecting and replacing various options makes it that much easier to settle on a final choice. I've discarded a couple of vehicles that looked pretty tough, but didn't have enough room to carry a goldfish to Manchester by the time the armour was installed.

With the vehicle built, you can select from a wide range of weaponry. This includes machine guns, flamethrowers, rocket launchers, recoilless rifles, anti-tank guns, lasers, minedroppers, spikedroppers, smokescreens, and so on. Weapons can be installed in front, at the rear, and on either side of your buggy. Only you will be able to determine, based on your own drive-and-shoot style, which location is best. Front, definitely, and machine gun or rifle, preferably. When you have enough money a laser is a good idea, because you won't have to buy expensive ammo for it: it runs off the car battery. The damage it can do, though, is actually less than a machine gun. I haven't tried all the options, yet: I'm still designing vehicles that will survive the 232 mile trip to Scranton.

The last addition to your car is probably the most important, especially the novice Duellist: Armour. You can get up to 60 points per vehicle side, but the toll is heavy in terms of weight used. And armour is a lot cheaper to buy than it is to have repaired.

You can see that there are enough options in this game to keep you going for a good number of hours before you get anywhere good enough to actually get anywhere better at it. And there are a number of fine points I haven't touched on that add even more interest to the game. Once you feel strong enough to hit the highways, there is a lot more to discover; the graphics are very good for a game of this type, and all the cities have different buildings that offer unusual choices. In Atlantic City, for example, you can actually gamble at the Casino. Play Poker, or if you prefer, a quick game of Twenty-One. (The odds in these two games are just like in real life: heavily slanted in favour of the house.) You can visit the home of Origin Systems Inc. in Manchester, for a commercial about their other products.

The odds in these two games are just like in real life: heavily slanted in favour of the house.

The back of the game box suggests that there is more going on here than just fighting and duelling: "Somewhere within the 16 cities and outlaw-infested highways of AutoDuel are the clues you will need to complete the ultimate mission." I don't yet know what that ultimate mission is, but when my Prestige level hit 30, I heard a rumour at the truck stop in New York that there was information for me at the weapons shop in Scranton. And along various highways, I've seen funny looking arrows and a sign saying "ORIGIN". Give me another hundred hours of playing time and I'll let you know what I've found out.

OPINION AND HINTS:

One entertaining and involving game. This could get me started on other, more familiar themed role-playing games. The graphics are great, and the documentation supplied is well-written, informative, and nice to look at. Origin Systems and their founder, Richard Garriott, spend a great deal of time on their packaging and their game ideas to pull you into the fantasy of it all, as you'll now if you've played ULTIMA IV. This keeps the cost of software quite high, but I think it's worth it. The play value is high, as you have the opportunity to do a good deal of thinking as well as a lot of action-oriented playing. I like this combination the best, out of the dozens and dozens of games I've tried.

I've come across only one problem, apart from some suggestions I'd like to make to the authors: my version won't let me get healed at the Gold Cross, and, once I'm in the building, it won't let me get back out. I've tried the options at both Gold Cross buildings in the game; both times the only way out was to power down. I haven't been able to find out if this happens only on my own disk, or on all Atari versions of the release number. I know it doesn't happen on the Apple version, thanks to some information from Troy at the National Capital AutoDuel Association club (that's right, this game is popular enough to support its own club).

The absence of the following is no detraction to the game, but I would like to see them included: a feature on the weight tally at the assembly plant that would show you how much your car is overweight, when you are designing it. Right now it shows how much weight you can still add in, say, weaponry, but because you can add and remove items as you experiment, it is easy to go over your limit. At these times the tally shows "?????"; it would be better if it showed, for example, "<685>", indicating that you must get rid of 685 pounds of excess poundage to bring your vehicle back within its legal boundaries. Also: when you die on the highway, there is no indication of who hit you or his weaponry, other than the graphics display of the car and the "rounds". It would be advantageous to get a readout on the class and components of the enemy, to allow you to better design your next vehicle in anticipation of similar attacks next time out. (On the other hand, since the Outlaws are always the same and in the same place when you venture from the cities, a few practice runs will give you enough strategy to defeat them. Still, it would make the game even more interesting.) And finally, what I thought was a weakness turns out to be a strength: the road map gives no indication of mileage between towns, so you have no idea how much longer you must suffer the enemy before you finally reach safety in the next city. Your vehicle, however, is provided with an odometer, and you can mark down the mileage yourself when you get there... all part of the fun of discovery.

The final word:

I like this game; I haven't spent too much time with role-playing games, because they sounded long and boring. My opinion is changing. For others of my ilk, you'll be okay with this one. On the flip side, those who like to engage in the Phantasies and the Ultimas may find this a little tedious after the initial learning curve. The one saving grace would be if there is actually an "ultimate mission". Maybe someone knows already and can fill this author in.

RILED AGAIN: XE SOFTWARE REVIEWS

By Michael D. Riley

NEW OR SOON-TO-BE-RELEASED:

After a summer that showed hundreds of releases for other systems, and almost nothing for the XL/XE line, autumn is gearing up to be the hot season for Atari games. Following is a list of titles, not all confirmed as fact, that you can expect to see soon:

ALIANTS, SPRONG, SPACE LOBSTER (Star Soft)
BORODINO 1812 (KREntek Software)
GAUNTLET and PAPERBOY (Mindscape)
THE GUILD OF THIEVES (Rainbird)
MONEY\$PIN (White Bag Software)
DROPZONE and SOLAR STAR (Microdaft)
GUNSHIP (Microprose)
50 BASIC GAMES (SSI)
BUREAUCRACY (Infocom)
BOULDERDASH CONSTRUCTION SET (Epyx)
TENTH FRAME (Access)

There are also a number of previously released games being repackaged and offered at a lower price. Some are educational children's packages, but a good deal of them are little known adventure and arcade games. Often they come three to a box. They're available in our city right now.

SWAT

from MASTERTRONICS \$9.95

This company called Mastertronics has become the expert at releasing tidy little games at decent little prices. This summer they released no less than four new titles for the 8-bit Atari, among them a colourful little arcade-type game called SWAT. The screen shows a top-down view of you and your two man SWAT back-up team as you march through the streets of a city terrorized by hoodlums, blowing away anyone who gets in your path. Well, almost anyone: every so often an innocent little old man strolls by, and if you shoot him your score drops by 1000 points. Points are scored automatically the further you advance, merely trying to stay alive. The play area is depicted as a typical city street, with office buildings on either side, overturned cars to get in your way, and manhole covers scattered here and there. Eventually you make it to a cross-street, which signals the end of that particular level, and begins the "bonus" screen where you attempt to knock off hordes of hoods and rescue a kidnap victim. Game play is simple to learn, hard to master. Graphics are good, with a lot of colour. A good game to get if you like repetitive

manouevres with some possibility of getting better. The only drawback seems to be one that is common to Mastertronic games: no extra men are awarded at high score levels (or maybe I just haven't made it that far yet!).

ACE OF ACES

from ACCOLADE \$49.95

A WWII fighter-pilot game, involving the simulation of a RAF Mosquito fighter/bomber, wherein you learn to fly the plane as four different people: Pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, and Navigator. Each position is represented in the game by the view that you would have in the aircraft itself. Sort of. The screens are all drawn very nicely. The Engineer, for example, has both a Port and a Starboard side view of his working area, with controls for throttle, boost, trim, landing gear, fuel... even fire extinguishers for those scary times when an engine bursts into flame. While learning to fly the plane is not nearly as difficult as something on the level of FLIGHT SIMULATOR, learning to fly while simultaneously shooting down enemy pilots or bombing U-Boats is something else again. Fortunately, you don't have to try to become and "Ace of Aces" right away: You can select the Practice mode to beef up your skills at one of four available missions: Dogfights, Train Bombing, U-Boat Bombing, or V-1 Buzz Bomb Bombing. Unfortunately, this doesn't make it any easier: this is a game that will definitely take some time to become proficient at. Several nice features have been incorporated to make game play interesting and quick, although the documentation (while nicely presented) is a little confusing with regard to making your initial options selection. If it looks like you're going back to the title screen after you've chosen a Practice mission, don't worry; just keep hitting the Return key and eventually it'll start. The rest of the manual, while including all the facts, leaves much to the imagination. Probably just as well: we wouldn't want it to be too easy. My own opinion is that while this is one of the more interesting looking simulations to arrive lately, it won't hold my interest for too long.

GUNSLINGER

from DATASOFT/INTELLICREATIONS \$39.95

One of a new breed of hi-res graphic/text adventure games. In this one, the screen always shows a list of verbs and nouns on the right side. You can click on your choice of words, rather than having to type in your commands, just as if you had a mouse, like big brother ST. The only problem is that it takes forever to drag the arrow-shaped cursor up and down the list. I found it much better suited for the directional compass: click on N, W, S, or E and you will move in that direction. The major advantage of the word lists, then, is that you may find some clues concerning which words to use at various locations in the game.

Then again, you may not. The parser used in the game is the pits; then again, almost the whole adventure can be played using two word commands.

Maybe I should mention what the game is about: you, cowboy hero, set out to rescue your buddy before he gets hanged by some nasties. You have two days to find him, and the Dalton gang to deal with along the way. The adventure will take you through six specific areas, such as towns, mines and trains, before you reach him. The game progression is also linear, which means you can't move on to the next area until you've figured out everything in your present location. This makes it less frustrating, I feel, than some of Infocom's notoriously difficult puzzles. Other things I liked: the game program checks your disk sides so there is no crashing if you insert the wrong one (the game is six sides long); you can save as many games as there are letters in the alphabet; graphics usually load into memory before you need to see them, so the screen refresh rate is very fast; and finally, when you 'R'estore a game, reloading is almost instantaneous. One thing I didn't like: when I completed the game, it just ended; there was no congratulatory screen or anything. Bottom line? Good fun at an introductory level for this genre.

JEWELS OF DARKNESS and SILICON DREAMS from RAINBIRD

Following on the huge success of their scrolling graphics/text adventure THE PAWN, available for several machines, the RAINBIRD/FIREBIRD team from Britain is pushing out as much software on this side of the waves as they can. This is good news indeed for 8-bit owners. Two of their recent releases are, once again, graphic/text combos. Although I haven't seen these titles before, I get the impression that they are new packages for games that were released previously in Europe. There was a hard-to-find series of text adventures grouped under the name LEVEL 9, and these new ones are subtitled "from Level 9 Computing". LEVEL 9 was also from Rainbird.

Each adventure is packaged in a tough plastic case with a beautiful piece of artwork on the front cover of the enclosed 'novella' indicating the style of story that lies within. There are actually three adventures in each set, giving you a trilogy in adventures for your money. The games can be played individually, but top score can only be achieved by successfully completing all games in succession. All three adventures in each package are loaded from a single-sided diskette, and a word of warning here: the games are for dual-density drive owners only. The entire game loads into RAM on the XE (thank HEAVEN somebody's listening to us XE owners with our extra memory), and this provides several distinct advantages over standard-fare graphic adventure games. The main one is that there is

relatively little disk access during play. This is great: my prime complaint with other graphic games is the undue amount of time required to load the picture portion of the story. With these scenarios, you can actually continue typing in your commands while the picture screen is being drawn. This lowers the frustration level of puzzle-solving -- immensely. There are also two user commands that are a joy to see: RAM SAVE and RAM RESTORE. This means, of course, that you can save your game to the present point into RAM and then bring it back instantly. Nice touch, and one that other game companies (are you listening, Infocom?) would do well to incorporate.

Other nice touches: as with THE PAWN (and the soon-to-be-available GUILD OF THIEVES), a good short story has been created to set the scene for each adventure and bring the player into the proper mindset. Both books are fairly well written and quite humorous. Playing tips are included, and playing instructions are clear and detailed. Graphics, on the other hand, are average, given today's standards. And so is the parser, although the program is very well error-trapped, and responses from the computer will often tell you when you are attempting the wrong actions. And finally, you won't find the quality of description that comes through in Infocom games and much of THE PAWN. Bottom line? Well, they're not "new" games, but they are different, and that fact, coupled with the added play features, makes them worth a try. The one I have played for any length of time (Silicon Dreams) indicates that the puzzles are indeed intricate and will require a lot of work to complete.

PIRATES OF THE BARBARY COAST from STAR SOFT INT'L INC. \$29.95

The ad goes "If you liked SUND OG, you'll like PIRATES". Well, SUND OG was never available for the 8-bit, so we will be looking at this game with an unbiased eye. As Captain of a merchant ship in centuries gone by, you find that your daughter has been kidnapped by Bloodthroat the Pirate, and he wants mucho gold to give her back. Since you don't have the money, you must raise it, by taking your ship from port to port along the Spanish coast (as depicted on a map screen), trading goods as you go and trying to build up your purse by making shrewd bargains. During your days at sea, you will invariably run across pirate ships who will try to send you down to Davy's Locker. If you sink them first with your cannon, you can board the floundering ship and look for booty, or read the Pirate captain's log, which will give you tips on trading prices and the like at certain ports. When you have collected enough gold, you sail off into the islands in search of Bloodthroat, where you can pay him the ransom (c'mon, wimp!) or try to blow him sky high.

Apart from strategizing for trade goods, you must also keep enough food, men, and cannonballs on board to see you between ports and to fend off pirate attacks. The action part of the game comes from loading your cannon: You have 18 of them and each must be loaded individually, following all the unique steps that were used to load the real thing. Thing includes selecting a cannon to load, putting in powder, getting the push rod to tamp the powder, doing the tamping, getting a ball, putting it in the cannon, getting the brush... and so on. Quite a series of steps, but once you get the hang of it, you'll be more worried about doing all these things fast enough so that you fire a shot before the offending Pirate ship can nail you and slip away.

Graphics screens are well drawn and very interesting, but there are a limited number and they lose their attraction quickly. I understand the same is true for the ST version of the game (released previously), even though it has more screens. Game play is fairly straightforward, but I found it limiting. One is quickly reduced to keeping lists of port names, prices and clues, and preparing to go back and forth, back and forth, to complete your quest. Personally, I find no excitement in this: there's no thrill in knowing that in an hour or so you're going to link up all the pieces of a jigsaw for which you already know the picture. But that's just me. In contrast, take a look at HACKER from Activision, which could also be completed using a mathematical process, but which was much more interesting and had a lot of action in it at the same time. And it was much less entertaining, graphically. I really enjoyed that game. This one is... OK

INFILTRATOR

from MINDSCAPE \$49.95

This is one great looking game. Top level graphics and a terrific story line give INFILTRATOR all the earmarks of a winner. Only trouble is, I can't get far enough into to find out if it's really as good as it looks.

INFILTRATOR is another(!) simulation/action game with a flying vehicle as the "protagonist". This time it's a Gizmo (TM) DHX-1 Attack Chopper (aka "The Snuffmaster"). No pretensions here as to the purpose of learning how to fly this baby: the hilarious instruction manual tells you to get in your killer machine and retrieve the secret info by any means necessary. Since your chopper is loaded with death devices, it's easy to see how you'll be spending most of the game. But is it? Once you arrive at your destination (any one of three major missions as Captain Johnny "Jimbo-Baby" McGibbitts/ AKA The Infiltrator) and get into the enemy compound, a whole new adventure of search, unlock and destroy begins. All graphic, of course.

As the ace chopper pilot Jimbo-Baby, you're flying one of these hot, newly purchased machines to save

the world. The big, funny and very well written manual incorporates such tidbits as a quote from the CEO of Whizbang Enterprises on the new Gizmo (TM) DHX-1: "Warranty? Er, umm... You don't really need one of those. That's for sissies. Here, let me show you the new passenger seat restraints...". I say, if the game is half as good as the documentation (which, by the way, if filled with screen shots to whet your appetite) this game will be a gas. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, I've rented this package twice and I still haven't been able to keep the Gizmo(TM) in flight for more than a few minutes, let alone get deeply into the game. Bottom Line? If you liked simulations such as Super Huey, which showed a fairly realistic chopper cockpit, you'll probably love the graphics and structure of this souped-up sucker. Further, the game is not limited to learning how to fly, which means that once you've mastered the rudiments, there would appear to be a lot more game to play. This one will take some time, and that's as it should be if a game is keep your interest. In this case, however, I can only speculate; I would appreciate hearing from any of you who have some experience with the game.

BOP 'N WRESTLE

from MINDSCAPE \$49.95

Another one from Mindscape, and I'll say it again: fifty bucks is too much to pay for a game, especially a clunker like this one. Recently converted from the Commodore version (thanks at least for that much, Mindscape), this is a wrestling simulation, although it is played more for laughs than for real, much like professional wrestling. You can wrestle a number of goofy looking opponents, and you get to choose a goofy looking guy for yourself, too. (Even a "lady" is included... no chauvinists here, gang.) Who would you like to be: Molotov Mike? Angry Abdul? L.A. Bob? Vicious Vivian! Once you've selected, it's a good idea to go into the two player mode so you can practice the moves. There are an amazing number of holds to master, via joystick or keyboard, and that's where this program hits the mat. The "quick" reference card showing the keyboard moves will scare the tights off you. Many of the holds require "prerequisite" moves, utilizing combinations of keys or stick moves with and without the button pressed. There are no less than 23 moves from the airplane spin and atomic drop to a reverse suplex and a turnbuckle fly. Okay, I admit that it's nice to have a wide variety of moves in a sports game for a change. I'll even grant you that, given time and practice, you can get them all down to a fine art. The problem lies more with the graphics.

Graphics, you say? But isn't this the game that the critics raved about when it came out for the Commonpoor 64, the one with the amazing graphics? Well, I haven't seen that version, but if this is their idea of graphic excellence, then Atari users stand high,

high on the pinnacle of supremacy. While a lot of effort has gone into creating individual goons to grapple with, the colours are all muted, and it's impossible to find two wrasslers with distinctive shades to pit against each other. Ordinarily, this fact might not enter into the discussion, but in this game when the two contenders get close to each other to engage in some kind of hold, their bodies blend together and you just can't see the holds, or even if you're in position to get a hold. As well, you must be exactly positioned in many cases to make contact, and often I ended up going behind my opponent, over and over again, as I tried to get beside him for a grab. The whole thing must have been ported over from the other machine with little attention to the Atari graphics capabilities; many of the edges are the old stair-step block style rather than the smoother look we are familiar with these days. **WORLD KARATE CHAMPIONSHIP** and **KARATEKA** have far superior looks and much more fluid moves.

Bottom Line: The game is hard to learn, harder to master, and boring once you do. The colour is dull, there's no big win to go for (straight three-minute matches), no bonus rounds, nothing. You can pin your opponent or break a pin yourself, and a lot of realistic sounding moves are there, but just try playing against the computer! Instant dreamland. This is a one or two player game that one or two other players can have.

The author would like to thank **ALI COMPUTERS**, 1158 Ogilvie Rd., for their assistance in providing software for review in this column. The staff at Ali would like all **NCAUG** members to know that their policy on software purchase prices is not restricted to reviewers.

TIPS & BITS

by Ed Wilton

Last month's TIP was extracted from the "Mapping the Atari" book by Ian Chadwick. As mentioned in last month's article, this is an excellent book which should be present in every programmer's library. For this month's BITS I flipped through the "Mapping the Atari" book and extracted information on a few of the more interesting memory locations. There are many more, but they are hidden within the covers of Ian Chadwick's book.

POKE 65,0 for blessed silence. This command will turn off the beeping heard during disk and cassette I/O. Poking location 65 with any number other than 0 will turn it on again.

POKE 77,0 will refresh your Attract mode. The attract mode rotates colours on your screen when no keyboard input is read for a long time. This helps to save the screen from "burn-in" damage. However, with some programs you don't want the colours to rotate. If this is the case, a simple **POKE 77,0** within a loop in the program will reset the counter to zero, thereby preventing the attract mode sequence.

TDC DISTRIBUTORS ON THE MOVE!

In a recent telephone conversation with TDC Distributors (Starsoft Development Laboratories), I was amazed by the number of new titles they have available. Even better was the fact that virtually all products will be released in Atari 8-bit and ST formats (along with other systems). Their staff includes three programmers working on Atari ST conversions, and three working on Atari 8-bit conversions.

A listing of some of their products includes: **Pirates of the Barbary Coast** (\$24.95) - ST and 8-bit;

POKE 82,x will adjust your left margin. The left margin is defaulted to two at the time of system boot. However, you can set it to any value from 0 to 40.

POKE 83,x adjusts the right margin just as **POKE 82,x** adjusted the left margin. The right margin is defaulted to 39 but can be set to any value from 0 to 40.

POKE 752,0 will turn the cursor on, while poking any other value into location 752 will turn the cursor off.

To close off this article for this month I am going to repeat my recommendation of last month. If you are doing any programming on the Atari, then go to your local Atari Store and purchase Ian's book.

One last thought to leave you with. As you know, we have started to receive the DISK version of **ANALOG** magazine. When the July/August issue finally arrived, the disk became damaged, but that's another story. Because of the damage I couldn't read two of the programs. After a call to a few of the local Atari dealers, Chiang Video came through and allowed me to make a copy of the **ANALOG** disk from one of their copies... free of charge. A special thanks to Chiang Video for their assistance.

Aliants - ST and 8-bit; **Mousetrap** (\$19.95) - ST and 8-bit arcade game; **Knickerbockers** (\$14.95) - ST arcade game; **Liberator** (\$19.95) - ST graphic arcade game licensed from England; **Time Blast** (\$19.95) - ST; **Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle** (\$19.95) - ST graphic adventure; **Stock Market - The Game** (\$24.95) - ST and 8-bit strategy action game for 1 to 6 players; and **Midway Battles** (\$19.95) - ST and 8-bit.

Look for more from this upcoming company in the future months!

Bob Thompson

Chiang Video

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Construction
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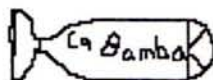


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Mega ST 2 and
Mega ST 4 available

Instructions

1. Set alarm clock for 8:00am Saturday morning.
2. Sleep
3. Get up at irritating alarm clock sound.
4. Shower, shave (if male), eat breakfast.
5. Take nearest available means of transportation and



Choose

6. come immediately to your nearest Chiang Video.
7. Give quarter to sales clerk.
8. Choose one or two players (depending on number of family members present),
9. Press **buy** button lightly to discover new items for sale.
10. Wiggle choose lever back and forth to simulate waffling



Buy

11. and confuse clerks.
12. Line up cross-hairs on intended purchase, or purchases, and press **buy** button firmly with cash, cheque, or any major credit card.
13. Take nearest available transportation to your atari computer.
14. Enjoy your purchase(s) !!!

ALTERNATE REALITY: WHAT A CONCEPT!

By Michael D. Riley

A Review of THE DUNGEON from
DATASOFT/INTELLICREATIONS
\$59.95

You may be one of the fortunate few who played the first game in the series ALTERNATE REALITY and actually survived longer than five minutes. No matter how often I booted the game, I could never come up with enough coppers to buy me a weapon, let alone stay at an inn overnight to recuperate my hit points. As a result, I was usually knocked off by some odd inhabitant of THE CITY before having a chance to really enjoy the game. In fact, the more times I booted up, the more frustrated and angry I got.

So what am I doing delving into a detailed description of THE DUNGEON, you asketh? Well, that's easy to answer: I loved the concept of THE CITY, so the trifling matter of not being able to play it well got pushed way back into the recesses of my own "Dunjinonthenek" when a guy by the name of Muhammed flashed a new shrink-wrapped box in front of my game-hungry eyes. There's a picture on the cover of some obviously mindless adventurer standing in the Portal to a dungeon below the infamous city of Xebec's Demise, with hideous arms reaching out of the shadows to snatch him... the attraction was just too much. (Xebec, by the way, is not a guy OR a gal: you'll find a full definition in most any dictionary.)

Well, let me tell you, THE DUNGEON is worth it. First, a quick description: You've been snatched by aliens and taken to some planet or dimension and dumped to fend for yourself in a world with two suns and a lot of strange people. Most of them are monsters, in fact, out to get you merely for having the gall to be walking the streets in the first place. As in many adventure games, there are numerous places to visit and many items to find that can help you stay alive and even allow you to have some fun while tearing up the town. What's different about the game (as compared to many other role-playing games) are the colourful, 3-D graphics, presented from an eye-level point of view, so that you really get the feeling you are walking around the place. OK, so you get the idea: kill, get points, get treasure, get weapons, kill, get more stuff, etc., etc.

THE DUNGEON only appears to differ on the surface from THE CITY by having you appear below the surface of the city to play. And, of course, some new monsters are thrown in. But wait! There is more, much, much more. Let's start with the documentation. The first game established a tradition of using fine scroll paper and flowing script in the preparation of the manual. But that book was maybe six pages of text plus a map. The new manual is over 40 pages long and gives you a detailed description of just about everything you could think of, plus the map AND an artist's rendition of the Dungeon itself (which may or may not be helpful, but is nice to look at). The writing style is clear and breezy, and often lets you know that they're just giving you enough to get started and that there's a lot more to find out for yourself. But one important area that wasn't covered in the original notes, except for one short paragraph, was how much the WAY you play will affect the outcome of the adventure; in truth, every step you take.

ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT PLAGUED "THE CITY" HAVE BEEN CLEANED UP IN "THE DUNGEON"

In some games you can just stroll about, killing everything that moves, looting as you please, and never paying much attention to moral ethics or any code of virtue. Even in the first three ULTIMA adventures, stealing food was a requirement for staying alive. But unless you sent in your registration card for THE CITY and started receiving Datasoft's Tips newsletter (or sent \$10 for the hint booklet) there was really no way you could be sure how much your personality and character were being monitored by the program. These details are covered quite well in the new docs, thank you. And you'd better be careful if you think you're a nice, decent sort of chap who would never kill an innocent person. Me, I have evil dreams every time I sack out at the Retreat, and I have no idea yet what I did to deserve them. I did, at one point, steal a bag of jewels from Gram's Gold Exchange, just to see what would happen in the Good/Evil side of things. I became fantastically wealthy, but I started having those bad dreams right

away. I did not save that character, though, so that's not what did it to me. But onward...

After a short intro to Fantasy Role Playing, and assuring you that you WILL be doing some real role playing, the manual covers in great depth the mechanics of play and the places and items you are likely to uncover in your travels. The Dungeon is four levels and its fairly big. Some of the locations correspond to areas above in The City, but there are many others that are brand new and quite intriguing. Its extremely important to map in this game, or you'll never find your way around. If you win a battle, chances are you'll find some treasure, be it money, weapons, potions, or magic items. The manual describes the wands, the magic eyes, the weapons and armour, the curses and diseases you might attract, the special magic cards and scrolls you can use for protection and defence, and most of the major retailers and guilds in the Dungeon. A number of the monsters roaming the smelly halls are also described. You'll meet most of them eventually, and by the time you have built up your character's level and stats (stamina, charm, strength, intelligence, skill, wisdom, and hit points) to a fairly reasonable degree, you'll be ready to leave the first level and go down, down, down. (Of course, if you have been able to successfully transfer your CITY character into the DUNGEON, your game will start with a whole different point of view. More on this transference option later.) Here, you'll find a sequestered "Clothes Horse", whom you can't ride but who will trade some magic items if you happen to be wearing any fancy duds. (Silly me for throwing away my blue suede shoes and black silk kimono.) And the deeper you go, the wilder it gets. All in all, a very nicely done and enjoyable program, with very little of the frustration often experienced in games of this type when you must cover the same ground over and over again to accomplish your goals. There are other reasons the game is so nice to play, and I'll address those now.

The original CITY game was notorious for its difficult play mechanics. Monster encounters were too random at the beginning, and they were too powerful. You were stuck with the character attributes that are randomly selected for you at the beginning of play. If you wanted a better character, you had to reboot the game. The program is extremely copy-protected, so loading time was far too long. The game utilizes four disk sides, and every time you entered a shop or special place, you had to wait while the new elements were loaded from disk, and this always seemed to take forever. Further, if you have only one drive, you were doomed to flip those disks back and forth constantly. As if this wasn't enough, new players often died early in the game. Since your character is REMOVED from the character disk when the game starts, you could not "resurrect" him: you had to start

a new character, unless you had the foresight to copy your character disk. In any case, this meant re-booting, and going through the whole waiting process all over again. If you were fortunate enough to survive a while and gain some treasure, you could save your character -- but you could not then re-enter the game. You had to re-boot once more, and wait, wait again, and the end result was that your character was removed from the disk again anyway. Whatever bugs were in the program also made it almost impossible for me to back up my "saved" character disk using DOS, as the documentation stated.

I usually had to use the built-in "elementary copy program" on side 2 of the master game disk, which was indeed elementary. My drive has an enhanced I/O speed with "Ultra-Speed" DOS, which triples the standard copy speed; I could not use this function. And, to top it all off, many users who have modified drives could not run the game without deprogramming their modification. In the case of some of these drives, deprogramming is not possible without removing the hardware, so these people could only hope that the store would refund their CITY purchase. The upshot of all this was that even if you were actually progressing through the game, you were being driven crazy at the same time.

ALL IN ALL, A VERY NICELY DONE AND ENJOYABLE PROGRAM, WITH VERY LITTLE OF THE FRUSTRATION OFTEN EXPERIENCED IN GAMES OF THIS TYPE

Well, I'm happy to let everyone know that almost all of these problems have been dealt with in THE DUNGEON, and new enhancements have been added to make it even more enjoyable to play. When you spend more time worrying about the mechanics of your equipment than the content of the game, you're on the losing end. Now, most of your time can be spent playing and enjoying this most entertaining of adventures. First, disk access time has been cut considerably. I have a 130XE, and when I boot up, a message flashes indicating that the program is initializing for the 128K system. The programming information has obviously been reorganized to provide much more efficient drive use. It still pays, however, to have two disk drives, as Disk 2 is accessed every time a new situation comes into play. (They've even added the ability to use up to four drives, so you never have to flip a disk.) You must also do some flipping from

time to time. Waiting time, though, is shortened considerably. Character stats are still randomly set at the start of the game, but now, if you don't like what you got, you just hit a couple of keys and start all over again. No more re-booting. Also, as you gain points that are worth saving (and that's a lot easier in this game), you simply save to disk and can then resume play, again without having to re-boot. I still find, however, that my own DOS will often not properly copy the character disk when I need a back-up, and that the ponderous built-in copy program is the only reliable alternative. Owners of enhanced drives will still find loading problems, too.

THE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE GAME AS A WHOLE FAR OUTWEIGH THE REMAINING PROBLEMS

The program is still heavily copy-protected, although this has less effect on loading time for THE DUNGEON than it did for THE CITY. One interesting point to note here is the way the protection works. According to the instructions, you can copy all sides of the three disks except Disk 1, Side 1, for archiving. I always have to ask, though, what do I do if my master disk goes on the fritz? I therefore always try to copy my masters as well. And at first it actually seemed to work with this one. But this is where a unique form of protection comes into play. After loading properly, with title screens and the opening scenario intact, you will always have an "Encounter" (monster meeting) the moment you step into the Dungeon. This particular encounter introduces one or two F.B.I. agents, who will hit you with the "long arm of the law" for more hit points than you have, thereby killing you immediately, and effectively preventing you from playing the game. Kinda dirty, but also kinda neat. But it has produced a problem, and I can't believe DATASOFT/INTELLICREATIONS released this game with a bug this big. The copy protection works so well that, if you try to transfer a CITY character into the DUNGEON (and building up a character in the CITY for use in sequels seems to have been the main purpose of that first game), the master program thinks you are trying to use a rip-off copy, and out pops the F.B.I. So all that time you spent working on your stats is wasted here. The customer service people at DATASOFT tell me that this version (2.0) of the game was recalled, to be replaced with a fixed version. But they told me that two months ago, and I have yet to see an updated version in Ottawa. And surely they must have

known about the problem. It's not the kind of thing that would have escaped play-testing. So this reviewer has to assume that they released the game before it's time to reap the financial benefits. Phooey on you, DATASOFT, if this is the case. Another result of this over-protection is that the game will "long arm" you if your drive is enhanced. One more bug causes the program to lock up occasionally when you try to save your character. I see from the CITY newsletter that Commodore users were warned to turn their drives off and on between each disk swap to prevent this same problem from occurring; somehow the programmers have figured out a way to make us equals with the Atari competition. (I haven't been able to determine if powering down my drive will alleviate this problem, but please, guys, if you're reading this, help us out, will you?) Perhaps DATASOFT'S new affiliation with ELECTRONIC ARTS as distributors has something to do with all this mess.

THIS IS AN ADVENTURE THAT IS FUN TO PLAY

Since I seem to be dwelling on the faults of the program here, let me backtrack a bit and reiterate that the improvements to the game as a whole far outweigh the remaining problems. This is an adventure that is fun to play, (it's loaded with magic spells and items that you can really use, and I mean loaded), is full of humor, is extremely well thought out, and will have you wondering about your own morals as a doer of evil deeds before you can shake your magic wand.

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DATA SOFT:

REAL SOFTWARE SUPPORT for the ATARI 8-bit

by Michael D. Riley

Those of you who buy this magazine regularly are all aware that there is usually more space devoted to the Atari ST machines than to the 8-bits. In fact, the real reason I became a contributor to BYTOWN BYTES was in response to a plea from our esteemed editor, Bob Thompson, for more articles that would interest those of the NCAUG who own 8-bit computers. I won't go into all the reasons for this imbalance, as we all know what they are. I would like to look at one of the factors, however, and that is this: a general lack of new software production to keep our systems fueled up.

If you own an XL/XE, then you probably can tell me the exact hour that the last bit of new software hit the stores, and the precise time when the next one will arrive. If you own an ST, then you probably don't worry about it much, unless you're waiting for TIMEWORKS' new desktop publishing package; everytime you walk into your favourite store there seems to be a new package on the shelf.

I also don't want to get into the various reasons that certain companies don't put out much, if any, new pieces for the 8-bit line. Rather, I would like to focus on those companies who DO, because they deserve our support in return. Without them our machines would dry up and be good only for so much tinder in the fireplace. In this column I'd like to focus on a company that's become a favourite of mine since I bought my 130XE, and one that deserves a round of applause from our users group: DATASOFT/INTELLICREATIONS, based in Chatsworth, California.

A couple of years ago, most of the packages you saw on the shelves that bore the name DATASOFT contained PC versions of popular arcade games. Then there seemed to be a move to game versions of licenced properties, like CONAN THE BARBARIAN, GOONIES, ZORRO, BRUCE LEE, and the like. The first piece of software I ever purchased was called THE DALLAS QUEST, a graphics/text adventure game. My personal introduction to the company came when I got stuck at a certain spot in the game and decided drop a few shekles on a call to their customer line in California, to get the answer. I don't know the name of the nice lady on the other end of the phone, but she quite happily helped me out of my jamb.

Somewhere along the line Datasoft linked up with a group called INTELLICREATIONS. About the same time I was playing DALLAS, I read a review for a game for the XL/XE called ALTERNATE REALITY: THE CITY. The game was from DATA-SOFT/ INTELLICREATIONS (hereinafter referred to as D/I), and the reviewer said it was THE best game of the year. It sounded great, so I rushed out and bought it. All critiques aside (Ed. note: Look for a review of Alternate Reality: THE DUNGEON elsewhere in this issue!), the game premise was excellent: top-notch graphics and a variety of things to do in a game that looked really big. And quite a departure from the multi-screen/ arcade clones that most of us were getting pretty tired of seeing.

Soon, while other companies were abandoning the Atari line and moving to allegedly "safer" grounds, D/I was releasing new, interesting, and unusual packages of fun. Titles like MERCENARY: ESCAPE FROM TARG (Ed: reviewed in the July/Aug 87 ish.), GUNSLINGER, and 221B BAKER ST. are all unique entries in the area of gaming. Now we are also seeing some news from D/I in the area of applications

software with VIDEO TITLE WORKSHOP and GRAPHICS COMPANION I, both for use in creating custom screens for your

**IT'S ESTIMATED THAT THERE IS A
40% PIRACY RATE IN THE
SOFTWARE INDUSTRY.**

home videos.

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with Sam Poole, President of the firm that is introducing all these new packages for the Atari XE line. He is a well-spoken man, and his confidence in Atari users as paying customers showed through during our conversation. I asked him why his company is continuing it's productions of XE software in these trying times. He told me that their Atari software has always had good sales, and that D/I's market share among competitors in the business is strong. Thus, D/I will carry on with their support.

This was a golden opportunity to ask Mr. Poole for his opinion on software piracy, supposed to be so widespread among Atari users. I really expected a cold, off-the-cuff answer in the face of a topic that has been done to death over at "another" firm: what I got was a decided interest in the topic backed up by a good deal of market research, and no apparent bitterness. "Our reason for supporting the Atari is definitely NOT a matter sales," he said. "we can usually tell when customers call in with questions or problems

about their software as to whether or not they have an original copy of the program or a pirated copy... we may have some protection devices built in to the program and we can tell from the types of questions they ask. But we don't place that much stock in piracy problems." What about the fact that many owners of PC's and PC clones have access to unprotected software costing hundreds of dollars, such as the well-known spreadsheets and databases? I personally know of one fellow who copied a \$2500 scientific database into his hard drive for his portable, and he actually complained that, at 16 Mb, it took up too much space in his drive. This would seem to be a much bigger problem than the odd bit of game pirating. Mr. Poole's response: "We've done a good deal of market research into the area of piracy, and it's quite definite that piracy is much higher with Atari than with any other system. For one thing, Commodore drives allow for better protection; the Atari drives make it easy to copy programs. In fact, Atari and Apple are the easiest programs to break."

...owners of PC's and PC clones have access to unprotected software costing hundreds of dollars...

Mr. Poole went on to say that he estimates that overall in the computer software industry -- not just among Atari users -- there is a 40% piracy rate. His firm and other manufacturers he has dealt with all say they would prefer to distribute their packages without protection: they would be easier to produce and cost less, as well. Mr. Poole also described for me a little experiment they undertook not too long ago in which they released two software packages with copy-protection ignored, at the same time as they released several other new packages with protection installed. The results, he said, were "pathetic. The programs without copy-protections stuck out like sore thumbs: they just didn't sell, while the other programs sold relatively well." I asked him, out of curiosity, if he could name the two programs: "let's just say they were pulled from the market".

It was about this time that I felt I should outline to Mr. Poole the policy of the NCAUG which states that pirated software will not be shown, used, sold or otherwise recognized at our meetings or as part of our operations. He said that while piracy is still a common practice, he was well aware that most Atari user groups realize the problem that this kind of theft creates, and strongly encourage their members not to make copies for their friends, and thus support the manufacturers. But, he added, he still sees cases where it's obvious that someone is spending a lot

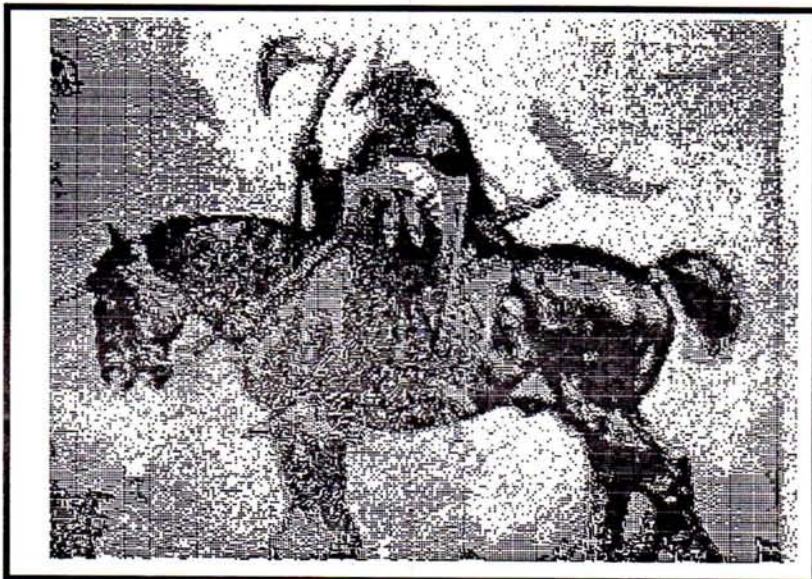
of time trying to crack program code: games that have been released by D/I have turned up less than two weeks later on the BBS, broken and ready for down-loading.

Moving on to more exciting things, I brought up the topic of the company's latest game release, **ALTERNATE REALITY: THE DUNGEON**, which at that date had not yet made it to Ottawa. I mentioned the review of the **CITY** in **BYTOWN BYTES** last year which, while suggesting that the idea itself was a great one, was pretty scathing in terms of the game-play execution. I also mentioned that I myself had been trying to play the game for seven months and was getting nowhere except frustrated. I wondered if there was a bug in my copy; I was left with the impression that -- okay, I admit it, maybe I'm not perfect -- perhaps I should try a little harder. Mr. Poole said that he's received phone calls from people who have worked their way up to Level 14 and have 100,000 coppers in their treasure pool.

But to the point: he feels that the **DUNGEON** is a much better game than the **CITY** and much more interesting to play, as there are a number of quests to complete and many more things to find and do.

It seems that the **CITY** was a very good seller, and on that basis they have decided to continue the series as originally discussed in the documentation that came with the **CITY**. D/I has obviously taken the time to listen to their customers' suggestions and have taken the time to implement many of them. You can find no better support than that in a company of any kind.

Questions or comments can be directed to the customer service department of
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ST/uff

(c 1987 Glenn Brown)

This is my first column written on my new Mega 4, and the first since I was elected ST President (again). Rather than write both a president's column and ST/uff, I plan to combine both in this one.

A few comments on the club, and where I'd like to see it head. We've come a long way in the past two years: the meetings are better organized, we have a 20 meg 2400 baud BBS, a great library of public domain software, and the newsletter you hold in your hand is one of the best club magazines in North America. There are a lot of people behind the scenes without whom none of this would have been possible: Bob Thompson, Jim Turner, Ted McNichol, Wayne Longman, Don Krentz, Bernie Zgola, Craig Tremblay, Tim Herridge, Roger Courschene, Alan Crawford, Harry Wilkinson, Dave Melamed, Terry Webb, John Kiss, Peter Blais, and many more to numerous to list. The club has never been run as a democracy, but any club member who wishes to work can have a say in how the club is run.

I hope to accomplish three objectives over the next six months: restructure the club organization with a board of directors to better reflect how it is actually run, broaden the circulation of the newsletter, and start working on an Atarifest in Ottawa for next fall. All will depend on our ability to get even more people working.

The Mega-4

So what's it like to have a Mega-4? The first things you notice (aside from the obviously bigger memory) are the detached keyboard, the battery backup for the clock (they give you a cheap set of Japanese AA batteries), and the fan (fortunately, a quiet one). I like the keyboard much better than the 1040's, but I wish it didn't click so loudly. The placement of the joystick and mouse ports is not perfect, but is much better than on the 1040. A number of small improvements are welcome: my favourite is that it clears memory much faster than the 1040. The new TOS now formats using David Small's Twister, which is supposed to allow faster read/write operations. I say "supposed to", because both the original and the updated Twister only trashed my disks (a quick test of the new format resulted in a disk- the one this article is being written on- that takes *forever* to write to.) I'll stick with DC Formatter. To answer your questions on the blitter: I'm still waiting for mine, but I've been promised that it's a free upgrade.

Speaking of software, the biggest drawback to the

Mega is that a lot of software doesn't run. In most if not all cases, this is because software authors have ignored Atari's programming rules. Some programs, like Winter and World Games, use CRC errors that the new drives no longer run. In many cases, programs allocate memory in a fashion that just doesn't work on the Mega. My biggest disappointment was discovering that K-Switch, which splits a 1040's memory into two distinct areas to run software, just doesn't run. Large ramdisks, which seem like the most practical way to use all the Mega's memory, tend to crash when you move from one application to another. Other programs that don't run properly include: Freeram (the public domain accessory that measures free memory), TextPro and DataTrieve (these both run if MAKEIMEG is run first), Shanghai, Arkonoid, Metro-Cross, all BBS Software, Jewels of Darkness, Mean 18 (bombs periodically), PC Ditto (not everything runs, including, unfortunately, my favourite piece of PC software: Q & A, but Bill Teal tells me that their next upgrade will fix most if not all of their Mega-related problems), and Publishing Partner. The problems with Publishing Partner are mostly minor (the hash marks to show position on the rulers don't show and you can cancel a graphic operation with the right mouse button), but the program now tends to crash in a rather spectacular fashion - displaying a 72-point null symbol above three cherry bombs. Sean Fogle of Softlogik tells me that they, like other manufacturers similarly affected, are working on an upgrade to correct these problems.

The Magic Sac runs fine: with 3.8 megabytes of memory available you can run spectacular Switch setups. A tip for those having problems printing: it's likely that your Finder is fixed at 830K. There are two ways to print: boot as a 830K Mac, or get another (virginal) copy of Finder (try the Mac SIG on GENIE).

Having a Mega-4 seems to me a bit like having a Ferrari Testarosa to drive on the Queensway

Having a Mega-4 seems to me a bit like having a Ferrari Testarosa to drive on the Queensway: powerful, good-looking, but aside from bragging rights, what is it good for? In fairness, it will take some time for the software manufacturers to write software that will be able to take advantage of the Mega's capabilities.

The Atarifest

The Washington, D.C. Users' Groups are running their third annual Atarifest in Fairfax, Virginia next weekend, which will be last weekend by the time you read this. Bob Thompson, Hytham Kahlil and Chris Carson of ReSeT magazine plan to fly down for the weekend, and Don Krentz, Terry Webb, Peter Blais, and I have planned a road trip to do the same (the basic idea is to rent a Lincoln, drive 1000km down on Friday, see the show on Saturday, and drive back on Sunday). With any luck, we'll have another slideshow at the meeting. I should add that all expenses, except for film and film developing, are being paid by the individuals involved. Aside from gathering news and visiting our friends in Washington, we hope to get a few tips for our own Atarifest next fall.

News From Atari

Aside from the fact that the Megs are out and available in town (\$2295.00 for the Mega-2 and \$3295.00 for the Mega-4, both without monitors), there is little to report. The Lasers and the PC's are expected "any day now", as are the blitter chips. It will probably be early 1988 before we'll see blitter upgrades for 520's and 1040's. I think we can expect some interesting announcements at the fall COMDEX in November and at the January CES.

Software News

The most (software) fun I've had lately was with Living Videotext. They have recently been advertising in MacUser a \$99.00 upgrade from Thinktank to MORE (both are outline processors). As a registered owner of the PC version of Thinktank, I asked if they'd let me upgrade to MORE, which is written for the Mac. They had some difficulty understanding my circumstance until I explained that I use an Atari ST, which can emulate both the PC and the Mac.

Thanks to Jeff Greenblatt of Current Notes fame for my favourite game tip this month. When booting Barbarian, type in the 04-08-59 (the programmer's birthday) on the first (playing) screen. The screen will lighten slightly, and you'll be invincible (you can just stroll past the monsters) and have unlimited lives!

New In Town

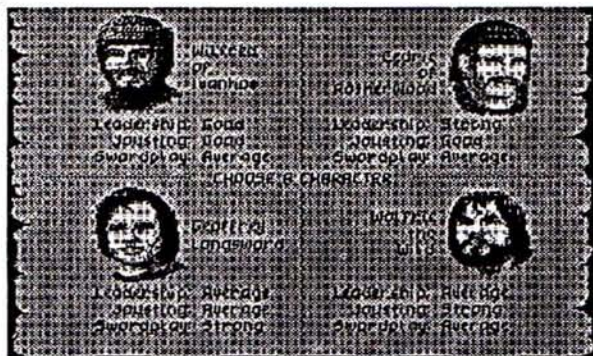
Lots of great new software out for the ST in the last few weeks:

Advanced OCP Art Studio - I bought this one just because it is the first ST drawing program I've seen that does automatic anti-aliasing (using shading to smooth curves). The user interface is one of the most user-hostile I've seen.



Bard's Tale

Bard's Tale - this is best conversion to the ST that ECA have done: a first-person RPG (role-playing game) with spectacular graphics. There are some problems: you have to disassemble your party before you save (otherwise their deaths in town or in a dungeon will be permanent), the map is confusing to follow, and it is too easy to get extra money (just create characters, take their gold, then kill them off).



Defender of the Crown

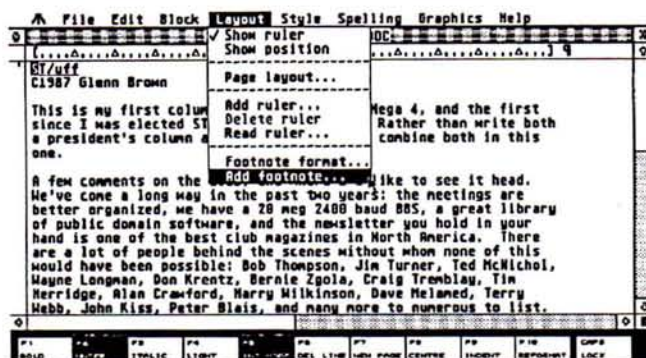
Defender of the Crown - this game by Cinemaware was first out for the Amiga, and it was rumoured that the graphics on the ST wouldn't be very good. Not so: this is a very good conversion that doesn't appear to suffer at all in the conversion. The game has more depth than is apparent at first look, and my only complaint is that it is a bit tough on the mouse.

F-15 Fighter Eagle - this game was one of my favourites on the 8-bit. The ST conversion isn't bad, but they could have spent a little more time on the docs and the graphics, both of which look rushed.

Gauntlet - this is an excellent conversion by Mindscape of the popular Atari arcade game. Buy it for your kids if you don't want to use your computer for a few weeks.

Into the Eagle's Nest - another great game from

Mindscape, this one somewhat reminiscent of Castle Wolfenstein.



First Word Plus

First Word Plus - both Chiang Video and Ali Computers have given up waiting and have imported First Word Plus directly from GST in England. The Plus version is available in both English and French, and offers footnoting, graphics, a dictionary, and more for \$149.00

Knight Orc - this is another graphic adventure by Rainbird (the people who did the Pawn and the Guild of Thieves), although it isn't up to their standard.

Marble Madness - when ECA told us that they couldn't do this one, we should have believed them.

Music Construction Set - ECA commissioned the guys at Intersect Software (remember their ramdisk?) to do MCS. I'm no longer doing much with MIDI, but it looks pretty good.

Pinball Wizard - another Pinball Construction Set type game.

Sentry - this is a conversion by Rainbird of a Commodore game. I can't see why they bothered.

Terrorpods - this is the latest by Psygnosis (Barbarian). I find it a bit confusing to play, but the graphics and sound effects are spectacular.

Coming Soon

There's still a lot waiting in the wings for our favourite computer: look for the Calligrapher, Cyber Control and Cyber Paint, Dungeonmaster, Gunship, Indiana Jones, Microsoft Write, Paperboy, and Spectrum 512 to be released this fall.

Timeworks' Partner ST (accessories) and Word Perfect (like the names says) have both been released in the States, and Tempus has been released in England, although none of them has shown up yet in Ottawa.

My award to the weirdest software name has to go to the new high-end Dutch word processor named "Steve".

A few products that I'm looking forward to seeing :

Regent Software's The Informer Database (written by the guy who did Habaview).

Antic's 512 colour paint program Spectrum 512.

M/CADD, MiGraph's 3D CAD package: for the best interface I've yet seen. Word is this one will be released with a cartridge as part of the protection scheme.

Neutron Engineering's Word Up, a new word processor with fonts, graphics, and footnoting.

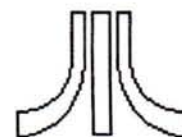
Test Drive - this game was released for the Amiga last week, and has ruined my last four lunch hours (playing the darn thing). It's a car race game where you first chose your car (Porsche, Corvette, Lotus, Lambourgini, or Ferrari), then take off down the road with a cockpit view that includes an accurate dash, complete with rear view mirror and radar detector (both work!).

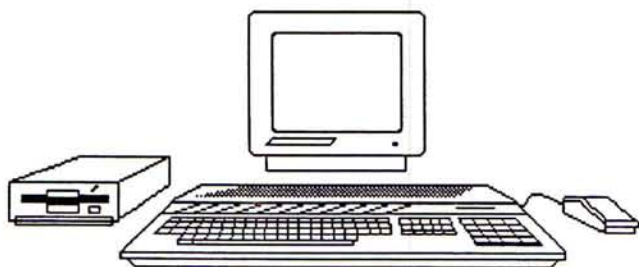
Word Perfect - because it is the standard, and because the GEM interface makes the ST version actually *better* than the IBM version.

Piracy

I get a chance to read a lot of user group magazines, and a review of MichTron's Airball caught my eye in the latest issue of The Acorn Kernel (the newsletter of Atari Owners of Rochester, New York). The reviewer "got" Airball, did a cursory review: one paragraph, which he ended by stating "...ST Copy, version 4.8 won't 'back it up', either." What I want to know is does the author know that version 4.8 of ST-Copy is a pirated version of the legitimate program which was broken so that it could be put up on BBS's? I doubt it. By the way, I'm a registered owner of ST-Copy, version 3.0 (and about 70 other ST programs). It seems to me that too many people that don't *buy* software complain about the lack of quality. If more people actually *bought* the software they used, maybe the quality level would improve.

Well, that's all for this month- see you at the meeting Tuesday!





NCAUG/ST Disk #36

This month's disk includes the following:

GO This folder has `GO_BOARD.PRG`, Richard Farrell's adaptation of the Oriental game GO, written using GFA Basic. This game runs in both monochrome and colour.

LOOK.MEM This program, written by Dan Rhea and Robert Birmingham using Mark Williams C, is designed to let the user see a visual representation of memory usage.

MIAMI_FS.II This folder contains flight simulations for use with Flight Simulator and Scenery Disk #7.

POSTSCRIPT The program in this folder, `1stW2PS.PRG` (1st Word to Postscript), is a conversion program, written by Berend F. de Vries of Holland, that rewrites a First Word or a First Word Plus document into a Postscript file (for printing on a laser printer).

TUNN_VIS.ION This program is the latest GFA wonder from David Addison. It's a commercial-quality arcade game that runs only in low resolution.

VBI This is for the programmers in the group: a Vertical Blank Handler package written by Bill Dorsey and John Iarocci.

BLITROMS.TXT This text file explains some of the features of the new TOS.

CONTROL.ACC This is Atari's new control accessory, which I have been told may be freely given to ST owners. The biggest difference is that it takes up only one accessory slot (the Install Printer and RS232 Configuration are now built into the accessory). I have no idea whether or not this works properly on a 1040, but it's worth a try!

Many thanks to Craig and Bill at CompuCentre Carlingwood for downloading the files on this disk.

Make the News

HEADLINES

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Continued on page 4

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SUPERBASE PERSONAL-

A Relational Database Program with a Difference

Review by C.H. (Harry) Wilkinson

Superbase Personal is a full-featured, GEM-based relational database from Precision Software Ltd. of Surrey, England. It is supported in North America by Progressive Peripherals & Software, 464 Kalamath Street, Denver, CO 80204 (Phone 303-825-4144).

Superbase was written for the MS-DOS environment, and the manual is written with all the usual IBM hardware nomenclature; however, a well-written Atari ST Prologue is included which explains any differences or peculiarities of the ST version. The version tested was Ver 1.026 dated Apr 87, and was provided by Progressive Peripherals & Software for this review.

The Superbase manual is a high quality wire-bound document which is well written and indexed. It starts with a tutorial chapter called "Getting to Know Superbase" which leads you through all of the routine operations required to work in the Superbase environment. The chapter is structured to first provide a detailed description of each of the menu selections, and ends with a fifteen minute tutorial session in which you work with one of the sample files provided, and perform various search and manipulation functions. At the end of this phase, the new user will feel quite comfortable with the operating environment which is, in the main, quite natural and intuitive.

The Main Control Panel, which provides "push button" access to all the basic functions, is structured like the controls of a tape recorder and is continuously displayed at the bottom of the screen. Mouse-activated buttons are provided for Pause, Stop, Start of File, End of File, Current Record, Next Record, Previous Record, Fast Forward and Rewind. There is also a button for quickly locating a specific record, one for defining a filter screen if your selection criteria for records is more complex, and a final button for accessing the External File capability which is a feature unique to Superbase. (This feature enables you to establish a li-

brary of text or picture files, tag them with a keyword, and selectively call them to the screen for viewing, all from within the program. The feature requires maximum free RAM since the picture files are memory-intensive.)

While on the subject of memory, I'll mention another feature of Superbase that I hadn't seen before. A selector is available from which you can assign the size of working memory in increments of 512-byte buffers. The larger the number of buffers used, the less the disk activity (and thereby greater operating speed) in performing most record functions (except for a few operations which require checking of buffer contents before proceeding). The recommended selection is between 10 and 20 buffers.

Establishing a new file in Superbase is a piece of cake. The program leads you through the required steps of naming the file, establishing

multi-level passwords if desired, defining the field characteristics (text, numeric, date, and external with a variety of options in each), establishing validation criteria for data entries if desired, identifying which fields are required to have data included in any new record, and inputting formulas for any derived or calculated fields, if any.

The next step is identifying how you want the file indexed. It is possible to have up to 999 indexes for each file, but you must have at least one. Indexing provides a means of rapidly locating a specific record, and controls the order in which records are displayed on the screen during operations, so it is appropriate to have two or three indexes using the fields which are most likely to be required to isolate a record. Unlike some databases, Superbase routinely updates all indexes whenever a record is changed or added. This requires more time for each index added, so it is best to keep the number of indexes to the minimum. The regular updating of all indexes is a nice feature since it totally eliminates the need for retroactively re-indexing after changes.

A selector is available from which you can assign the size of working memory in increments of 512-byte buffers. The larger the number of buffers used, the less the disk activity (and thereby greater operating speed) in performing most record functions

File operations in Superbase can utilize any number of Open Files simultaneously; however, only one file can be identified as the Current File. The Current File is the one used for routine searches, file manipulations, and record editing or additions. However, some update operations have the ability to make changes to other linked files automatically (a feature that must be used only after gaining a full understanding of the techniques to avoid unexpected file corruption). As well as working with any selection of Open Files, it is possible to be selective about which Fields you wish to work with in any given operation. By selecting Open Fields from the Project menu and then selecting only the fields that you wish to work with in the order that you want them displayed, you can customize your worksheet to suit your immediate needs.

Superbase permits unlimited flexibility to edit both file structure and individual record contents. Care is required, of course, if a field type is changed since data can be irretrievably lost.

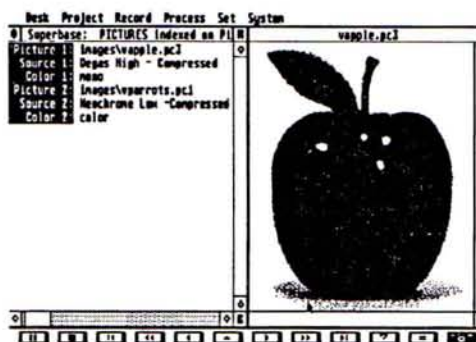
Also, in spite of the fact that Superbase automatically writes a number of separate files to disk during its data manipulations, it is possible to remove all traces of a particular file with a single operation if desired. This operation, once activated and confirmed, is irreversible.

Individual records in Superbase can be displayed in three ways. First, the most convenient for browsing through the files, is Table View. This format is essentially equivalent to a spreadsheet with each Record on one row, and all similar Field data in one column. However, unlike spreadsheets, Superbase permits you to change the number and order of fields that you wish to display by using a simple Open Field selection. In addition, Superbase has another unique feature (at least to me) that permits you to compress the width of the columns in the display thereby allowing more columns on a single screen. This is done at the expense of temporary truncation of data, but for some operations it is extremely useful. It is also possible to print this truncated display if desired. Should you wish to return to the original column width, you simply double click on each compressed column in turn, and re-select display of the Current Record to restore the un-truncated display.

The second method of display is the Form View. This permits selected Field names and their contents to be displayed in a form which can be customized to suit

your requirements. The form is designed by simply dragging the Field blocks to their desired position on the form until the desired effect is achieved. This format can be saved as part of the File Definition, and is automatically displayed in that form whenever Form View is chosen.

The final display method is Record View, the mode most often used for editing or inputting data for a new record. Each Field name is aligned, one under the other, starting in the top left corner of the screen, and is right justified to the longest Field name. Data input or editing is then a simple matter of working through the Fields from top to bottom. Keyboard equivalents are provided for most critical functions to eliminate the need for you to remove your hands from the keyboard during editing or addition of files.



The Query command is the heart of any database system since that is what determines the power available to you. In Superbase, the Query command gives you flexibility to produce formatted output from one or more files and customize both the content and appearance of the output. The

details of specific Query operations can be saved as a separate file on disk so that routine queries can be called back for future use. The saved file identifies all of the pertinent open fields, filter requirements, reporting formats and display order. This means that you only need to structure your query once (much like writing a macro, only easier), and then call it up at any time with the click of the mouse to produce standard reports. Editing of the Query structure is an easy task should you require a customized report, and if it is only going to be required for this one operation, the regular version that is saved on disk need not be altered.

Superbase report formatting is the most convenient method I have seen in any database. The format is virtually at your discretion regarding what is shown and where. In the Table format, columns can be placed at any desired tab setting and be set to a specified width regardless of the width of the originating Field. Additional derived Fields can be generated at this stage if desired. Report totals and group subtotals are readily available, as are the mean and count of the total report or any group within it. Column headings can be altered from the existing Field name for display if desired. Any level of record ordering can be implemented regardless of the index in use at the time. As mentioned earlier, all details of the report can be saved to

disk and recalled for use at a later date. The output can be first directed to the screen for a preview, and then sent to the printer for hard copy. Printer initialization codes can be input to get any of the desired characteristics that your printer supports; however, it is not possible to program changes to the printer characteristics in mid-report.

I experienced some system difficulties during the writing of Query coding for report output. The problem occurred when I used improper syntax for a sub-totalling request, and although the program accepted the incorrect code as part of the Query command, it kicked me back to the Desktop when I tried to implement the Query. It appears that some work is required in error-trapping to rectify this annoying trait. (I had a few other occasions when I was unceremoniously returned to Desktop without knowing why, but I suspect it was because of similar syntax-type problems. Unfortunately, I was unable to isolate the specific causes except in the one instance above.)

As I do not yet have any experience with linked files in database operations, I am unable to report on this feature of the program. Apparently, this type of operation requires a bit of experimentation to get it right, and until I am more comfortable with routine operations and the quirks of the system, I don't propose to stray too far into the unknown. Tread cautiously here! I'll report my findings when I get venturesome enough to give it a try, and have an application that requires the use of this power.

A mailing label program with a wide range of features is built into the system. It can be customized to print labels of any size up to 10 lines/label and up to four labels abreast. A nice feature is the ability to duplicate the same label up to 99 times without re-selecting. Any selection of fields that will fit on the label, and any desired order of the fields can be chosen for printing. Multiple fields can be printed on one line (say, Title, Initials, Surname on the first line and City, Province, Postal Code on the last). The program automatically inserts spaces between multiple fields during printing. A label alignment test is built in to permit experimentation before committing to final print. A "one-off" option is also included to cater to envelope addressing. The usual filtering function can be used to select which records are to be printed. Unfortunately, I found no way of saving more than one label format (say, one for a three-abreast label sheet and a second for envelope addressing). It appears that the last format used and saved with the File Definition is the one that you get back when the file is opened next time.

My experiences with this program so far have been excellent. After overcoming a few initial problems, I am now working with a file of over 200 records and the program is performing smoothly and efficiently. With the exception of the error-trapping deficiencies mentioned earlier, and a major problem getting the Import function to work (until I discovered that it was necessary to have the Superbase program files on the same disk as the file to be imported when you are working with one drive), I have found the program to be easy to work with and exceptionally convenient for generating customized reports. The one real deficiency noted is in the Import function. Apart from the problem noted above (which required considerable time and experimentation to isolate, and which when finally overcome, still resulted in some file distortion and unexpected data truncation without apparent cause), I believe the program would be more useful if it had greater file-format options for Import and Export. As it is, only delimited ASCII files are recognized, so a conversion is required to import spreadsheet or other database formats (the conversion process can create the need for considerable file editing to avoid misinterpretation in the conversion process). This will discourage the conversion of larger files to the Superbase format because of the potential for conversion problems.

In summary, Superbase is the way to go for anyone requiring a full-featured database but who is not into writing of line code to tap the power of the program (as is required, say, in DBMan). Being fully integrated into the GEM environment, it is extremely easy to use once you have mastered the basics. Dialogue boxes are used extensively, and most selections can be mouse-activated. The only area requiring the writing of code is in the development of complex Query and reporting operations, and in the main, the techniques required are intuitive, avoiding the requirement for a lot of memorizing of syntaxes and formats. I very much like the program, and plan to convert all my database requirements (including my wife's business accounting) to Superbase format. Any problems encountered to date were easy to work around once the problem was known. (In the interim, there is a requirement for additional information on the README file to point out the problems discussed above.) Finally, it looks like my search for a powerful yet easy-to-use database system for the ST is over---I expect I'll be using this program for many years to come.

C.H.W.

ST Tips

by Bob Deskin

MULTIPLE WINDOWS:

Did you know that you can have a disk open more than once? Well you can. Once a disk is open in one window, you can double click on the same disk icon to open another window. What's it good for? Well, if you have a folder open in one window, and the root directory or another folder open in the other window, you can simply drag files from window to window in order to copy them from folder to folder or from a folder to the root directory (that is, no folder). You can also copy a file from within a folder to the root directory by dragging the file icon onto the disk icon. The disk icon is assumed to be the root directory.

Multiple windows can also be handy for comparing the contents of two disks. Normally when you pop in a new disk, you press ESC (the escape key) to update the directory listing in the window. If you double click on the disk icon instead, you will leave the original window open, and open a new window for the new disk. You can then compare the contents side by side. Just remember which is which if you do any copying or deleting.

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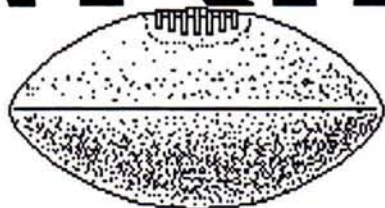
Did you know that the operating system remembers where you had your windows open, even after you close them? Of course it does. Otherwise it wouldn't be able to position the window in the same spot the next time it was opened. This information is also saved when you save the desktop. We normally consider only the windows we can see, but you can set your desktop so that up to four windows are positioned where you want them whenever they are opened. Simply boot with your standard desktop showing, then open another window and move it to wherever you want. Continue until all four windows are open (four is the TOS limit). Then close windows until you're back to your standard desktop and save the desktop. Now when you boot, your windows will open where you had them before.

While I was experimenting with windows, I accidentally clicked twice on the close button of a window (the upper left hand corner). I happened to be in a folder, and the entire window closed. After experimenting, I found that you can go back two levels by clicking but not more. The clicks are not as close together as a true double click either. Maybe as the first window closes, the second window close button is available for the second click.

* **ACCESSORY MEMORY:**

Whenever desk accessories are discussed, someone complains about the amount of memory they take. Well, just how much do they take? Each accessory is different so the only way to tell is by actual measurement. There is a public domain desk accessory called FREERAM that tells you how much free memory you have. If you note the available memory with and without the accessory you're interested in, you can tell how much the accessory uses. The last time I checked, FREERAM itself took 7200 bytes. I found that out by testing FREERAM on itself. I copied the file, calling it FREERAM1.ACC and booted with two FREERAM accessories. I noted the memory available, deleted the copy and rebooted. You should test this yourself because I don't know if there is more than one version of FREERAM.

GRIDIRON



For those of us who are diehard computer sports fans, there have been a few memorable programs come along over the years. Programs like "Gamestar Football" and "Gamestar Baseball" were among the early great games. Then, Electronic Arts released "One on One" (still very playable), a little later things started getting much better with the release of "Hardball", "Microleague Baseball", "GBA Basketball" and of course "Leaderboard Golf". There have, of course, been other great games but those named have been my favourites.

Football fans have had a few releases over the years, but few, if any, have been able to capture the heart of the game. A recent release, "GBA Football" was a valiant attempt from a totally new perspective, but somehow, this game seemed to end up as, a not so smooth battle one on one with the defense, without a feel for the game.

Now, Bethesda Softworks has captured the essence of football with the release of "Gridiron".

This is **THE** computer football game and it will likely be quite a while until someone unseats it as the reigning champ.

After the intro and the roar of the crowd and a flip of a coin the kickoff begins the game. Trying to feel out your opposition you decide to call a simple 42 RUN play. With a click on the mouse button you handoff to your halfback and attempt to guide him through a maze of linemen. As you are tackled, you can hear the grunts and groans of the line. Five yards... not too bad. After building up your confidence with a few running plays the first down is announced over the stadium PA system and you decide to get brave and try a tricky HALFBACK OPTION. You know that it worked fine in practice mode, but ... The hike ... the handoff ... can your receiver get open ... yes ... the pass ... COMPLETE! ... 25 yards ... great play!

With twenty pre programmed offensive plays to choose from you have a good variety of plays to mix up the defence. However, if you just happen to know of a play, you can create your own and save it to a

separate data disk. The defence play selection is just as complete with twenty plays to choose from, again creating your own plays is an option.

You can even create your own teams and add power where you want it if you can agree with your opponent on the maximum team point count. This is a good way to handicap a game. Each player is scored for speed and strength (0-20) with a maximum number of team points being set to whatever the two players agree to (nominally 1000 points). There are special considerations for certain key offensive positions but in general it is as simple to set up your team as it sounds.

There are four levels of difficulty ranging from beginner to pro. The practice mode allows you to practice plays on offense without giving up the ball, but it is not competitive so, although it does help you get the mechanics of a play down, it does not ensure that it will work in a game situation.

The main difference between levels is speed but the defence seems to be better as well making for lower scoring games.

Over all this is an excellent football simulation, great fun for any football enthusiast. PS: I'm about to play my first game against another football fan; wish me luck.

Happy Gaming
Pat Quinn





BARBARIAN

by: Tommy Robbs

You are Heger, the most famous dragon-slaying, monster-mangling Barbarian in the universe. Heger's mission is to seek out the world of Durgan which is terrorized by the evil Necron. You must avenge your father's death and destroy Necron and his evil world of Durgan. Your prize for this destruction is the kingdom's crown.

The game comes on two disks which are copy protected. In the game you can use the mouse (easiest), keyboard, or the joy stick(not recommended). My choice would be to use the mouse because it's much easier to maneuver Heger passed obstacles, to fight, etc. Heger's moves are walk to the left, right, up and down, stop, jump (or flip if Heger is running), run left or right, attack, defend, flee, get, use and put down. In the game you will encounter two weapons other than your sword, they are a bow and a shield. All three weapons will become handy in different situations.

You must beware for there are hidden traps and vicious monsters who don't stop until they or Heger is dead. The object of the game is to face Necron

himself and destroy him and an evil crystal. You only have four lives to try and penetrate Necron's temple and destroy him.

This game is played mainly in a dungeon, it is the world of Durgan. There are approximately 51 different screens in the dungeon and 2 outside in the marsh at the beginning. As you get deeper into the dungeon the screen changes color from green to blue to gray.

The world of Durgan has many different kinds of monsters. Such monsters are crazed bull dogs which run towards you, warriors and cave men who walk towards you swing their clubs or swords, and wizards and dragons who shoot fire balls at you, each is tough to beat. Don't waste your weapons killing everyone, you don't get extra points for it and you need all your arrows in the end. There are also traps which Necron has set to try and stop you. In each game you must remember where these traps are. The traps range from dropping blocks, dropping spikes, parts of bridges falling out from under you, wooden walkways falling apart and making you plunge to your death, and snakes coming out of the walls.

Then finally, you come face to face with Necron. He even laughs at you, (an incentive to make you kill him). You must use your wits to destroy Necron. He is a bit smaller than you and has a gray body that is enclosed with a gray cloak, he also shoots fire balls at you. You must have all that comes with the game to win, note in the introduction there is a clue to winning. In the end, when you toss the evil crystal into the volcano the screen turns red and the time that you took getting to Necron begins to count down. When the time expires, the volcano erupts.

What I liked the best is at the end of the game, the picture is of Hegor on a corner of the kingdom's castle watching the volcano erupt. It took me approximately thirty minutes to complete the game once I had spent days trying to remember where the monsters and traps were and trying to master each and every screen. The fun after you've completed the game is to show off to your friend who can't play the game and to try the challenge of improving your score (I guess).

My favorite screen is designed for that first time player that becomes frustrated after a few deaths on the same screen. You come on to this screen by a ladder from the top left. At the bottom of the ladder you must stop and take a few steps toward the left without hitting the wall, turn around towards the right and make Hegor run and jump as quickly as you can to avoid a trap. Then you must walk down some steps to avoid falling off that floor. Then after all this work

there is a monster at the exit from the screen, but don't worry, he's easy to get out of your way.

One thing that I think could be added to the game is a save game feature for those times when you have to go eat supper, go to the bathroom bad, or your mom or dad tells you "You've had your eyes glued to that stupid computer all day", because it sure would be nice to pick up where you left off.

The graphics are excellent. I've never seen a game as detailed in the graphics department as "Barbarian". Hegor, the warrior-like monsters and the dogs even make the umff, grunting and barking (from the dogs) sounds just like it does in real life. The story in the booklet that comes with the game is fourteen pages of a well written introduction to "Barbarian". It comes in a well designed box with a 17" x 28" poster, the two disks, quick reference card and the story booklet. Out of ten I would give Psygnosis' "Barbarian" game a nine. Psygnosis has many other games such as "Terrorpods", "Deep Space", "Brataccas", "Arena", and "Arena Brataccas". I'm looking forward to seeing what their new games are going to be like.

Can you become Hegor, and avenge your father's death? Enjoy!

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DESKTOP.INF

By Andre Latremouille

All of you have seen this file on your disks, some have probably loaded it in a word processor to modify it. But what does it really mean. Here is an attempt to explain it.

This is an example of what it looks like when loaded into a word processor:

```
#a000000
#b000000
#c777000700040007005520050555222
 0770557075055507703111103
#d
#E 9B 02
#W 00 02 0A 02 1E 17 09 D:\*.*@
#W 00 00 2A 01 1D 17 00 @
#W 00 00 0E 09 15 0B 00 @
#W 00 00 0F 0A 15 0B 00 @
#M 00 00 00 FF A FLOPPY DISK@@
#M 00 01 00 FF B FLOPPY DISK@ @
#T 00 03 02 FF TRASH@ @
#F FF 04 @ *.*@
#D FF 01 @ *.*@
#G 03 FF *.APP@ @
#G 03 FF *.PRG@ @
#F 03 04 *.TOS@ @
#P 03 04 *.TTP@ @
```

You will notice that all the lines start with the symbol "#" followed by a letter.

The line #a contains information about the RS-232 port and is made up of six bytes

byte 1 means 0 = full duplex
1 = half duplex

byte 2 is the transmission speed as follows:

0 = 9600 bauds 1 = 4800 bauds
2 = 1200 bauds 3 = 300 bauds

byte 3 is the parity

0 = no parity 1 = odd 2 = even parity

byte 4 is the bits per character

0 = 8 bits 1 = 7 bits
2 = 6 bits 3 = 5 bits

byte 5 is the transmission X ON or X OFF as well as the information "ready to send/clear to send" for modem transmission.

0 = x off rts/cts off

1 = x on rts/cts off

2 = x off rts/cts on

3 = x on rts/cts on (most usefull)

byte 6 is the strip bit on/off

0 = bit on

1 = bit off

The line #b contains information about the printer output. It is also 6 bytes long. Here is what they mean:

byte 1: type of printer

0 = dot matrix 1 = daisy

byte 2: color

0 = Black & white 1 = color

byte 3: pixels per line

0 = 1280 1 = 960

byte 4: Print quality

0 = draft 1 = Final

byte 5: output

0 = printer 1 = modem

byte 6: paper type

0 = continuous 1 = single sheet

For most printers the line reads #b 001000.

Line #c is the longest line and contains information about the colors, mouse reaction intensity etc. The first 48 bytes are the colors (16 times 3) with three numbers corresponding to the red, the green and the blue. The last bytes are used by the control panel for the other functions

byte 49: mouse response from 0 to 4

byte 50: keyboard click

0 = no sound 1 = with click

byte 51: The error message bell

0 = off 1 = on

bytes 52-53 are the key repeat rate from 0 to 46

bytes 54-55 the character repeat delay when a key is held down: from 0 to 21

Line #d is not used

Line #E is used for two different functions and is composed of two hexadecimal numbers.

The first controls the appearance of dialog boxes as well as confirmation to delete. A 1B means the the files will be represented by icons and sorted by name with confirmation to delete. A D3 would be files as text sorted by size and no confirmation to copy but confirmation to delete.

The second number determines the resolution. A 01 for low resolution, 02 for medium resolution and 03 for high resolution.

The next four lines concern the windows. Gem allows us to open four windows, so we have four lines. If you remove one you will only be able to open three windows. For each window, there are seven numbers followed by @.

-- the first two numbers indicate the position of the horizontal and vertical scroll bars. 0 indicates the windows are closed.

-- the third and fourth numbers indicate the horizontal and vertical left corner of the window.

-- the fifth and sixth numbers are the width and height of the window.

-- the seventh number I'm not sure what it does?

-- the @ is present when the window is closed. If it is open it will be replaced by the directory path to be shown.

for example A:*.*@ (all files on A:)
B:*.DOC@ (all files with extension .DOC)

The following three lines concern the icons for the disk drive sand the trash can. The letter corresponds to the type of icon.

M for disk drive

T for trash can

C for cartridge

the first two numbers are for the location of the icons vertical and horizontal position. The third number determines the type of icon that will be used.

00 = disk drive 01 = folder icon

02 = trash icon 03 = program icon

04 = file icon

Numbers over 04 will not allow the system to function. The following number FF is used as a delimiter between this part of the line and the name of the icon.

The next line determines which icon the system must use for folders and files. A line starting with #F is for folders, icon 04. Line #D for files, icon 01.

The next four lines start with the letters G, F, or P. #G means a Gem program (icon number 03). Program not using Gem but that use TOS use the letter #F and those which use TOS with parameters use the letter #P. They also use icon number 03.

This is it for a description using the example desktop above, but there are other possible lines such as:

```
#G 03 04 D:\FIRSTWRD.PRG@
```

```
  *.DOC@
```

```
#G 03 04 C:\PROFESS.PRG@
```

```
  *.WKS@
```

```
#G 03 04 C:\DBMASTER\USEONE.
```

```
  PRG@ *.ONE@
```

These lines appear when you install applications in the options menu. You only need to click on these applications to get them started and the fileselect box will appear with the proper extension.

This concludes the DESKTOP.INF descripton, I hope it is useful for some of you.

The GFA SUITE

How suite it is!

In last month's Bytown Bytes there was an ad for GFA Basic and Accessories. I wonder if you realize the significance of this suite of programs to the future of basic programming on our STs.

I've been raving about GFA Basic for some months now... its speed, ease of use and overall quality. Now that most of you have seen the excellent public domain GFA program, "Monopoly", by David Addison, the potential for developing real, professional applications in GFA is readily apparent. This is especially true since the introduction of the GFA Basic compiler.

This lightning fast two-pass compiler is completely GFA Basic compatible... if it runs in the interpreter then it can be compiled and run as a click-on application, directly from your desk-top. That there is an improvement in speed goes without saying.

Now there are more GFA accessories.

GFA Vector is an "Add-on" utility that allows you to use 3D vector type graphics directly from your GFA Basic program. There are the limitations that the graphics are only "wire-frame" and there is only the false perspective of size at your disposal, but the speed of execution and the flicker free display more than make up for these small annoyances. Though it's not all that easy to use or understand (at least not for me), It is definitely impressive. One's mind boggles at the possibilities.

As if that's not enough, now there's GFA Companion. This is a utility that will help you to design dialogue boxes and then write the GFA Basic code for you. After choosing from one of many, ready made, dialogue boxes and adding you own labels or designing your own, this marvel saves a file to disk that, when merged with your own program, will not only draw this dialogue box for you, but keep track of your on screen choices. The best part is that, because GFA Basic is so fast, this file is all Basic...no machine code routines or VDI calls... so you can get into and edit it to customize your dialogue boxes even more. Imagine your own dialogue boxes with rounded corners, coloured and sized texts and maybe even animated graphics. Impressive stuff this.

The only stipulation is that if you are going to distribute your program, the code must not be listable. It must be PSAVED or compiled.

GFA Object adds another dimension (pun intended). This, high rez only, program is actually a sophisticated 3D object editor with the option of saving your object definitions as GFA Vector files. That means that anything that you can design in Object can be manipulated directly from GFA Basic... Boggle Boggle!!! There are advanced 3D display techniques like full Z buffering and hidden line removal in this program that make it really a joy to behold

There's more and more. Easy Record is a data-base program with the option of accessing your data, and your data-base routines too I suppose, from, you guessed it, GFA Basic. That means that if you have a custom data-base application and you already can write a basic program, you can design you own input and display screens, manipulate the date etc. without having to learn another language such as D Base or the like. I have't seen this program yet but this sounds like it has the potential to be the most powerful of the whole suite.

There's even a utility for recording and using digitized sound, even your own voice, within your applications. ST Replay supplies yet another option, as if there aren't enough already.

One can't help but conclude that the GFA suite of programs and utilities is the best thing to come along for Basic programmers for a long long time. If you are a serious Basic programmer, an amateur or just a beginner....do yourself a favour and at least give the GFA line a serious look.

opinion by
Jim Turner

By the way... There are two excellent programs on this month's "Disk" that were originally written in GFA Basic. David Addison has another hit with TUNNEL VISION and Richard Farrell has written a simulation of the board game GO. Have a look if you get the chance.

J.T.

Bytown Bytes SURVEY CARD #5 - November 1987

Please fill out the following sheet and return it to the editor, Bytown Bytes. You can return it at the next meeting, drop it off at G Plus, 130 Albert St., mail it to our mailing address, or give it to me in person.

If you don't want to destroy this page, please submit a photocopy.

Your comments will be most welcome.

Please rate each of the articles on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 is terrible, 5 is great). Please rate each article on level of interest (does the topic interest you), and on execution (how well was the article written or displayed).

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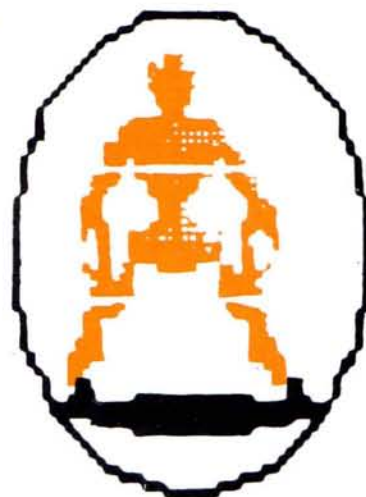
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